HEART BATTLES

Mirja Thomas

Sointu Elo

HEART

Kaarina 2019

© *Mirja Thomas, Sointu Elo* Battles of the Heart

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FOR YOU

The first part of the book "Matters of the Heart" is followed by a sequel, "Battles of the Heart." Mirja Thomas seeks to deepen the perspective she has already opened up on spiritual care. Her experience as a therapist and spiritual counselor has expanded year by year. As a result of a tropical illness, Mirja Thomas will not be returning to Finland or Europe from her current home in Australia.

Both books aim to help readers reflect on and reevaluate their lives with honest openness. We are often blind to our own beliefs, patterns, attitudes, values, and motives. These distortions have a negative impact on our close relationships and other human relationships. As we understand ourselves better, the quality of our lives and often our health improve as a natural consequence.

I am grateful that, as an editor and proofreader, I have been able to delve into questions that are central to Christian life. Mirja Thomas is my mentor in pastoral care. Without her broad perspective and experience, I would often be at a loss.

The subject matter of this book may divide readers' opinions. It would be easiest to ignore, deny, or explain away the difficult truths. However, the Bible clearly teaches us how we should relate to our Enemy and his actions.

Once we have accepted Christ's atoning death for ourselves, we can fight against our Enemy on the side of the Victor. He has promised us victory.

I hope that this book will also bring its readers closer to the living God and His mercy. God is powerful enough to save even the weakest person who puts their faith in Him.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Tiina Iskala for her graphic design, layout, and editing support. We would also like to thank our proofreader, psychiatrist and senior physician Outi Paavilainen, for her valuable comments. Warm thanks also go to artist and art teacher Salla Suonikko for her freehand illustrations, which bring the text to life. We would also like to express our gratitude to the late talented commercial artist, illustrator, and artist Anita Mustonen, whose illustrations were used in both the previous book Sydämen asioita (Matters of the Heart) and in this book. We were also delighted to use an illustration of masks drawn by Mirja's good friend Ken Dove.

Kaarina, March 2019

Sointu Elo,
Master of
Arts

1 THE WORK OF

EVIL SPIRITS

In recent decades, people's interest in the Devil and demonic forces of evil has grown and become more open. Christians would prefer to ignore the whole subject because they do not know how to deal with it. They believe they are free from the control of the enemy of their souls. Some trust in their ability to free people who are oppressed by the Devil. How can we distinguish truth from superstition and falsehood? It is best to rely on the teachings of the Bible, which tells us about the workings of the Devil and demons.

In addition to God's Spirit, there are good and evil spirits. Good angels are spirits who serve God. "Are not angels ministering spirits? Are they not sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). In addition to these, there are evil angels. "War broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. That great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

Years ago, I encountered for the first time a person who was clearly under the influence of the Devil. At that time, I had neither the intention nor the skills to help him. But the experience was so dramatic that I became interested in the subject. I prayed, read the Bible, read books on the subject, attended seminars, and sought to deepen my understanding in this area. Along the way, I have encountered many people who have been tormented or controlled by demonic forces to varying degrees. God has given me the skills to help them as needed.

During the Old Testament period, people understood the workings of evil spirits. "Israel provoked him to jealousy with their foreign gods; they angered him with their detestable practices. They sacrificed to evil spirits, to idols they did not know, to new gods they had not known, which their fathers did not know" (Deut. 32:16, 17). "The Spirit of the Lord

departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord began to torment him" (1 Sam. 16:14).

There are many examples of evil spirits in the New Testament. “When Jesus arrived at the other side of the lake in the region of Gadara, two men possessed by evil spirits came out of the tombs to meet him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. They shouted, ‘What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the time?’ A large herd of pigs was grazing in a field nearby. The evil spirits begged Jesus, ‘If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs. "Go!" Jesus said. Then the spirits left the men and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned" (Matt. 8:28-32).

“As the men were leaving, a mute man possessed by an evil spirit was brought to Jesus. Jesus drove out the spirit, and the mute man began to speak. The people were amazed and said, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel’ (Matt. 9:32-33).

“Then they brought to Jesus a man who was blind and mute because of a demon. Jesus healed him, so that the man could speak and see” (Matthew 12:22).

At that moment, there was a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an unclean spirit. He began to shout, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked the spirit sternly, saying, ‘Be quiet! Come out of him!’ Then the unclean spirit convulsed the man and came out of him, crying out with a loud voice” (Mark 1:23-26).

One man in the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you. He has a mute spirit. It seizes him wherever it is. It throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes completely rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” Then Jesus said to them, “O faithless generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." They brought the boy to Jesus. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately seized the boy, and he fell to the ground, rolling around and foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he had this problem?" "Since childhood," the man replied. "The spirit has thrown him down many times, even into fire and water, to kill him. Have pity on

us and help us if you can!" "If you can?" Jesus replied. "Everything is possible for those who believe." Then the boy's father immediately cried out, "I believe! Help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that more and more people were coming, he ordered the crowd to

and said to the spirit, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again!" The spirit cried out, convulsed the boy violently, and came out of him. The boy lay there, looking lifeless, and many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he stood up (Mark 9:17-27).

"After Jesus rose from the dead early on the day after the Sabbath, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons" (Mark 16:9).

"When evening came, many who were possessed by evil spirits were brought to Jesus.
He drove out the spirits with his word and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16).

One cannot read the Gospels without encountering the above examples. Jesus helped helpless people who were possessed by evil spirits. People with the same needs may come to us today.

Many accounts mention that the evil spirits left with a cry. Sometimes evil spirits leave quietly. When I help people, I often bind them in the name of Jesus and in the power of His blood so that they cannot harm their victims. Many Christians find it difficult to accept that someone could be possessed by evil spirits.

It is a battle against spiritual forces that is fought within the individual. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The battlefield is our minds.

It is good to keep this in mind when spreading the gospel. "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness" (Matthew 10:1). "And proclaim, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:7–8). See also Mark 16:15-18; Mark 3:14-15; Luke 9:1.

These texts show that Jesus commissioned his disciples to

continue his work: to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demonic forces. “And Philip came to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the gospel there

the message of Christ to the people. When the Samaritans heard what he said and saw the signs he performed, they gathered together in large numbers to hear him. Many were freed from unclean spirits, which came out of them with a loud cry, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. The city was filled with joy and gladness" (Acts 8:5-8).

Later, Jesus sent out his seventy disciples, giving them the same promises he had given to the twelve. He does not expect us to undertake such a task without the Holy Spirit, whom he has promised, who is the Spirit of wisdom, skill, and understanding.

The instructions for spreading the gospel are still valid today. "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). The gospel will be preached until Jesus' second coming and the end of the age of grace.

Now, if ever, is the time for pastoral care and the liberation of people from the snares of the Devil. "I desire that you fast and do justice and break the bonds of oppression, that you open the doors of the prison and let the oppressed go free, that you break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6).

What does "release the innocent from their chains" mean? For example, a child is born into a family where the parents consciously or unconsciously serve occult forces. The family may be filled with bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, violence, Masonic spirits, etc. The consequences of the parents' and grandparents' choices that are contrary to God's will are reflected in the life of the child. They weigh on the innocent child and bind him or her.

Try to help your loved ones and those close to you to find freedom, if possible. Whatever difficulties life brings your way, face them with God. If necessary, learn to command evil spirits to leave in the name of Jesus and the blood of the innocent.

As Christians, we are God's co-workers. He Himself wants to bless us as we work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In order to free our loved ones who are bound by the snares of the enemy of our souls, we may have to engage in fierce battles.

The enemy of souls does everything he can to keep people captive and defeated. Before, he worked secretly, in the dark, but now he works more openly. We all live on a battlefield without having chosen to do so. “Keep

your minds alert and watchful. Your adversary, Satan, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Here are a few examples of how evil spirits fight against God's children:

— "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel" (1 Chronicles 21:1).

— "The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, you may do whatever you want with everything he has. But you must not lay a finger on him.' Then Satan left the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:12).

— "Then the Lord showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. Satan was standing at Joshua's right side, accusing him" (Zechariah 3:1).

— "Simon, Simon! Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat" (Luke 22:31).

— "But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

— "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of God. They will receive what they deserve for what they have done" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

A woman came to me who had served the Devil without knowing it. Her grandmother had dedicated her to the devil when she was very young. One day, God spoke to her: "Who do you want to serve, light or darkness? "I want light," the woman replied to God.

The woman was kind and helpful. She used black magic for her own benefit and for the benefit of others. God continued: "Find yourself some Christian friends." She went to

church and found a friend with whom she prayed. One day...

one day, this friend brought her a Bible as a gift. However, she was unable to open the door. The devil prevented her from doing so. The friend left the Bible behind the door.

The woman gradually began to familiarize herself with the words of the Bible, but her mind was so bound that she did not understand its message.

After her decision, the woman became seriously ill. Her acquaintance brought her to me. The woman is deeply repentant of her sins and has given everything to Jesus. Her physical condition has also gradually improved. The battle in her mind and heart has been fierce.

Evil spirits are constantly fighting against all people. The powers of darkness are the forces behind wars and conflicts. They are our common enemies.

An acquaintance of mine told me that he had taken in a man who wanted to rest from his worries. The man's presence felt heavier with each passing day. My acquaintance's sleep was disturbed, and he began to experience various kinds of pain in his body. Disagreements and disputes arose between them. At this point, my friend called and asked me to meet the man. My first impression of him was positive. I asked him about his past, his parents, and his grandparents. His parents were Christians, one from Australia and the other from the Solomon Islands.

During our conversation, his mother called. She urged me to send her son to a

mental hospital. However, I wanted to treat the man first without jumping to conclusions.

I learned that his ancestors had used occult powers and that evil spirits constantly tormented him. He had given his life to Jesus and been baptized. No one had told him that he should confess not only his own sins but also the sins of his ancestors and renounce them.

"The people of Israel separated themselves from the foreigners and then confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers" (Neh. 9:2). "Then they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers, their apostasy and their rebellion" (Lev. 26:40). "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Ps. 32:5). "Whoever conceals their transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13). "If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The man I mentioned above was ready to confess to God all his sins that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him. He repented and confessed the sins of his ancestors, of which he was aware. He renounced them all in the name of Jesus. After that, I took his hands and prayed according to the promise in 1 John 1:9. As a representative of Jesus' followers, I commanded all evil spirits to leave the man in the name of Christ and by the power of His blood. I asked God to break all the curses, wrong attitudes, beliefs, and values that had manifested in his family. I prayed that God would fill him with the Holy Spirit and heal the wounds in his emotional life. I also prayed that God would bless the man with all the

blessings of heaven and bring something new into his life. Finally, I anointed and blessed him.

He was truly surprised by the change he had experienced in his life and thanked God for the freedom he had received in Christ. The man wanted to call his mother and tell her what had happened. His mother was also delighted. A week later, the man called to express his gratitude and tell her how happy he was with his newfound freedom.

THE WORK OF EVIL SPIRITS

Evil spirits want to conquer people's minds, thoughts, and bodies in order to control and destroy their lives.

One way is to burden people with the worries of everyday life in order to cause anxiety, restlessness, stress, etc. Dwelling on negative things effectively ties up energy and thoughts and strains the emotional life and spirit. Joy and gratitude disappear in the face of these attitudes. This also includes self-judgment and looking for faults in oneself. “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). “A slave is not corrected by words: he understands but does not obey” (Prov. 29:19).

With all this, the Devil wants to turn our minds away from God's promises. "The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

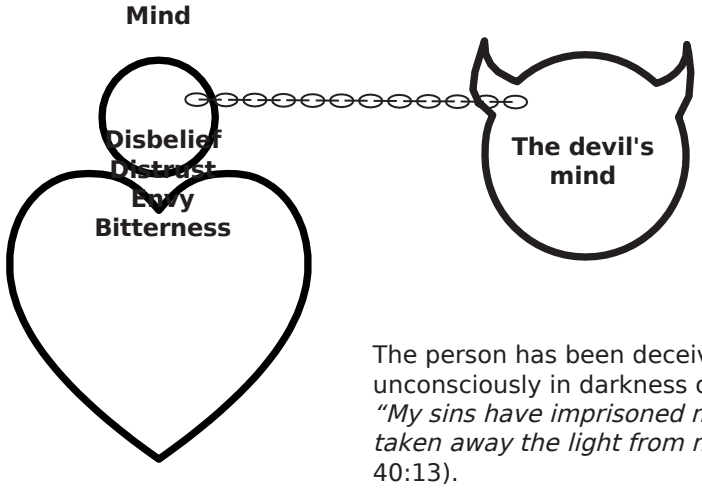
If we bind our identity to Christ, he is powerless. Nothing can separate us from God's love. Paul assures us: "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).

The battle for the human mind began in Eden when the Devil tempted Eve to doubt. Her doubt turned into a lie that she believed: What God had said was not true! They could

become like God.

“But the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made, and it said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”? The woman replied to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God has said, 'You must not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor touch it, or you will die. Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die; but God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil' (Genesis 3:1-5).

There has always been a great deal of physical and mental violence in the world. Many murderers say that "voices in their heads" compelled them to commit murder. They are often labeled as mentally ill. It is less common, at least publicly, to suggest that they could be possessed by an evil spirit. Of course, there are many causes of mental illness. Family curses can also lead to drug, alcohol, and medication abuse or other addictions.



The person has been deceived and lives unconsciously in darkness of mind. *“My sins have imprisoned me, they have taken away the light from my eyes”* (Ps. 40:13).

The enemy of the soul seeks to connect his own mind with the minds of people and fill them with his own distorted thoughts. He begins to manipulate people's lives. In this way, he confuses truth and lies. This kind of mind control is not always easy to detect. Unless we ask for the Holy Spirit’s

guidance in our daily lives, we can easily fall into the enemy's traps.

THE DEVIL'S WAYS OF BINDING PEOPLE

— **Prevents us from doing God's will.** "If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us" (1 John 3:10). “Paul said, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of everything that is good and right! Will you never stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord?’” (Acts 13:10).

— **He tempts us to do his will.** “You are from Satan. He is your father, and you want to satisfy his desires. Satan has been a murderer from the beginning. He is far from the truth; it is foreign to him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

— **Mind control.** “Then Satan went to Judas, called Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples” (Luke 22:3).

— **Blinding of the mind.** “I mean those whose minds the god of this world has blinded, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

— **Setting traps.** “He (the church leader) must also enjoy the respect of outsiders, so that no one will speak ill of him and he will not fall into the trap set by the Devil” (1 Tim. 3:7).

— **Tormenting people.** “The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord began to torment him” (1 Sam. 16:14).

— **Certain destruction in the future.** “Then he (God, the King) will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matt. 25:41).

The power of the enemy of souls has grown stronger over the years. It is commonplace in magazines, literature, visual arts, movies, computer games, and on city streets, even in homes. We no longer even wonder at the devil’s position of power among people. Today, we truly need God’s full armor to emerge victorious.

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand firm against the devil's schemes. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. So put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to resist and, having done everything, to stand firm" (Eph. 6:11-13).

Even though we live on a battlefield, we do not have to remain prisoners of war. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are victorious. The devil is already a defeated enemy. Christ took dominion from him when he died on the cross. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you" (Rom. 16:20).

Jesus said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Yes, I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:18-19).

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).

2 THE SPIRITUAL

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MIND

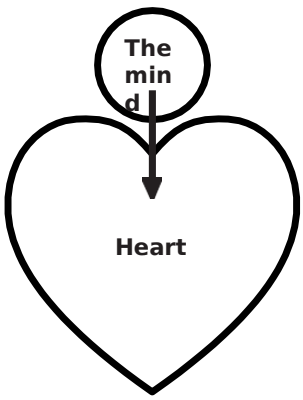
The human mind is a battlefield where the battles of life are won or lost. “We live in this world, but we do not fight as the world does. Our weapons are not human weapons, but they have the power given by God to destroy strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The weapons we need are spiritual and mental.

The mind consists of, among other things, thoughts.

- thoughts
- attitudes
- habits
- patterns
- beliefs
- boundaries
- images
- memories.

The mind is the control center of our lives! We can choose what we allow into our lives and what we reject. Others cannot make these decisions for us.

The way to the heart:



The mind is the path to the heart. What we allow into our minds goes into our hearts. What is in our hearts determines what kind of people we are. God is interested in our hearts.

“The Lord does not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 6:7).

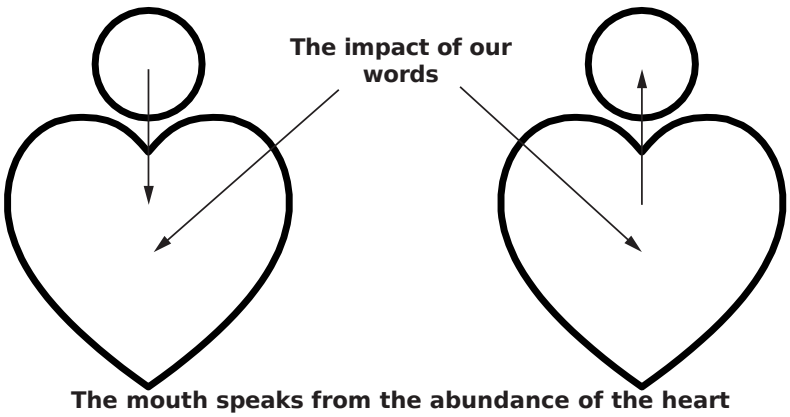
In Jesus' parable, our hearts are trees and our behavior is the fruit of those trees. The quality of the fruit depends on the quality of the tree. "You will know them by their fruit. You do not gather grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. A good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:16-18).

Without God, life can easily become colored by fear, bitterness, restlessness, and sin. The basic values and attitudes of life are revealed in speech and behavior.

"A good person brings good things out of the good stored up in their heart, and an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in their heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:45).

The meaning of words is greater than we realize. The words we hear from the media, from other people, or from our own mouths shape our thoughts, which come out as words. "A man's mouth is his own undoing, and his words are a snare to him" (Proverbs 18:7).

The more we think and talk about something, the deeper it sinks into our minds and hearts. It affects our emotions, reactions, and bodily functions. It also gradually begins to control our lives.



"According to your words you will be rewarded, and your words will determine what you receive. Life and death are in the power of the tongue—as you choose your words, so you

will reap the fruit" (Proverbs 18:20-21).

In my work, I have encountered many bitter people. Some of them are professing Christians. Their difficult lives have often led them to unforgiveness. They replayed their experiences over and over in their minds until bitterness took hold and their faith began to wane. The end result can be a hateful, bitter, and mean person who is difficult to live with. However, the hardest part is for them. At this point, some seek outside help.

— What factors affect the state of our hearts?

— What do we feed our minds with, or what do we dwell on?

— In what direction do we continue in our lives?

— What are we particularly interested in?

— What issues do we want to talk about?

— Do we listen to our words?

— Do we evaluate the attitudes behind them?

— Do we want to get to know God better by filling our minds with positive, encouraging, and hopeful promises from the Bible?

FORTIFICATIONS OF THE MIND

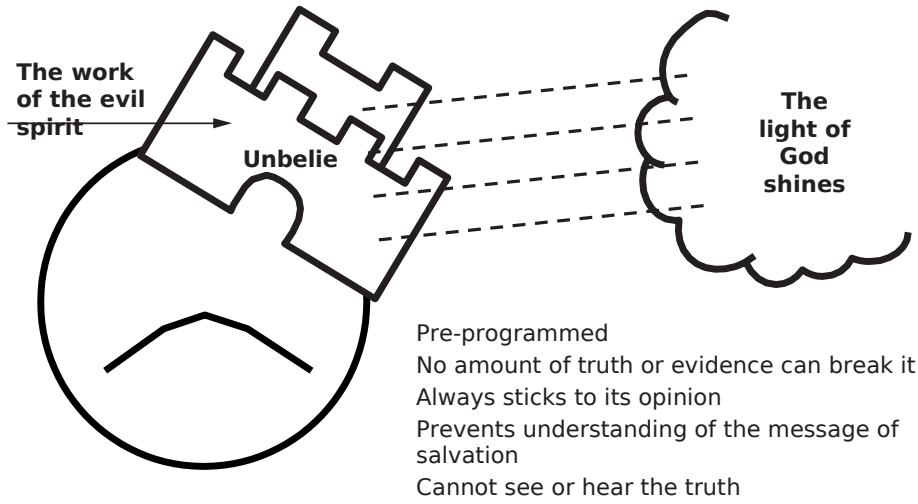
From childhood, the Devil seeks to build strongholds in our minds from which he can control our thoughts.

Strongholds of the mind include:

- prejudices
- unbelief
- hatred/self-hatred
- fear
- guilt
- feelings of inferiority
- pride
- selfishness
- rebelliousness
- bitterness
- addictions
- unforgiveness
- unrelenting grief
- revenge, etc.

Our own thoughts best reveal the contents of our hearts. If you feel deep gratitude, it rises from your heart. If your mind is burdened by many negative thoughts, they rise from an unhappy heart. Evil spirits seek to enter our minds in order to gain a foothold in our hearts.

These strongholds can also be described as programming, such as distorted family models where children have no boundaries, reckless spending, poor self-esteem, intimidation, disregard for God and authority figures.


The work of the evil spirit
Unbelie
The light of God shines
Pre-programmed
No amount of truth or evidence can break it
Always sticks to its opinion
Prevents understanding of the message of salvation
Cannot see or hear the truth

The strongholds of the mind blind our eyes to the light of the gospel. They prevent a change of heart.

Only God's word has the power to break down strongholds. "Is not my word like fire, like a hammer that breaks a rock?" (Jer. 23:29).

The task God has given us is to break down the strongholds in people’s minds, free them from Satan’s captivity, and guide others onto the path of God’s will.

The most common strongholds seem to be prejudices and preconceptions. I have encountered many prejudiced people whose attitudes have turned against them. For example, in spiritual circles, pastoral care has

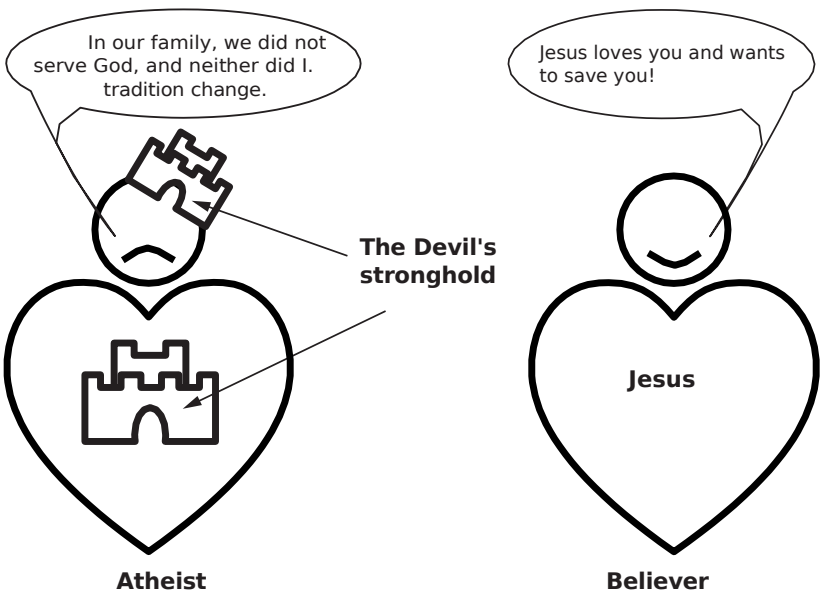
like a 'red rag' that is neither accepted nor understood. Because their childhood home operated in a certain way, they do the same. This speech is model learning.

Examples of modeling:

— If parents believe that their child is not good at math or languages, the child will believe it because that is what they have been told. The child will then begin to act according to their belief and fear these school subjects. Fears can have a negative impact on results.

— If a child feels that love causes pain, they will reject it! Parents tell their children that they love them, but they discipline them harshly, hoping that they will grow up to be decent citizens. The child's interpretations can turn against them, and difficulties will begin to arise, at the latest in their close relationships.

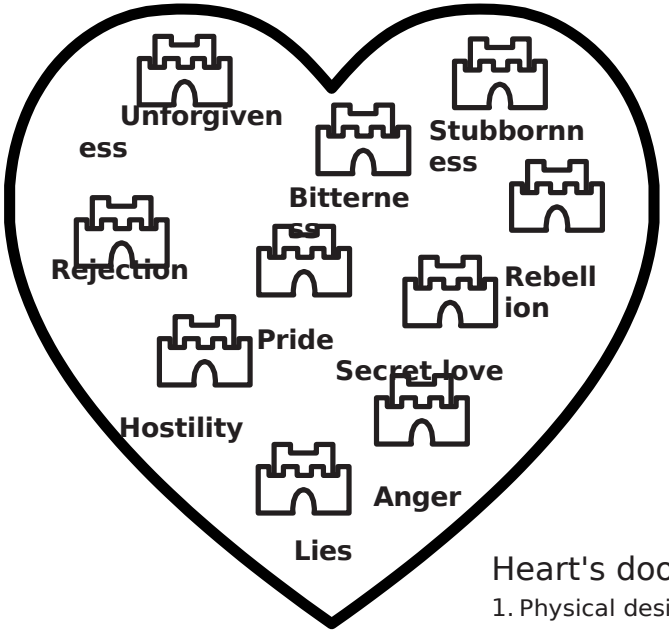
— If money caused arguments in the childhood home, the child's conclusion may be: 'There should be enough money so that there are no arguments! I want to be happy.


In our family, we did not serve God, and neither did I. tradition change.
Jesus loves you and wants to save you!
The Devil's stronghold
Jesus
Atheist
Believer

Uncomprehending heart

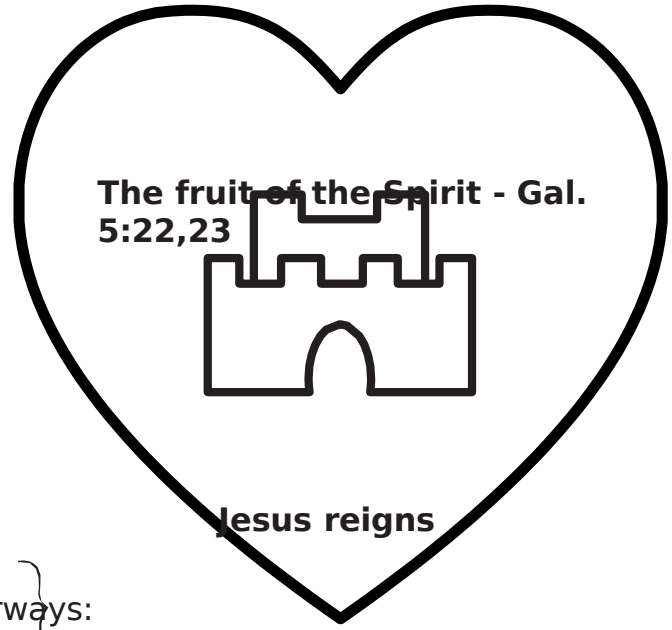
The devil's strongholds in the heart.

2 Cor. 10:3-5; Jer. 1:10; Isa. 60:12; Deut. 11:22,23; Matt. 12:34; 15:19; 18:34,35; 2 Corinthians 4:3,4; Ephesians 4:18; Revelation 3:17.



A pure heart

Ps. 51:10; Ps. 15:2; Matt. 5:8; 6:21; Eph. 3:17.



Heart's doorways:

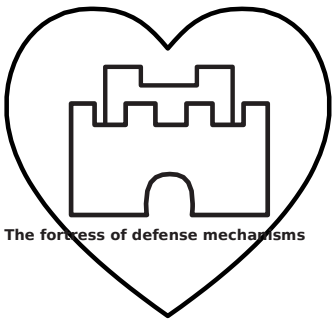
1. Physical desires
2. Desires of the eyes1 John 2:15-17.
3. A life of pride

Rom. 1:21, 29-32; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:17, 18; Luke 1:51; Prov. 12:20.

What other strongholds might be in your heart? Identify them, repent of them, and renounce them in the name of the Lord.

Take every thought captive to obey Christ. Phil. 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:5; 2 Cor. 10:5.

FORTIFICATIONS OF SELF-DEFENSE



Only God's power can break down strongholds. 2 Cor. 10:4,5.

Living without God, we had to learn to survive and defend ourselves on our own. We learned various defense mechanisms that are not useful in Christian life. For example, many people are familiar with "white lies," which can sometimes help us get through difficult situations.

Other common defense mechanisms include:

— Denying uncomfortable truths because telling the truth could cause one to "lose face."

— Living in a fantasy world, far removed from reality

— emotional isolation isolation from the present moment and thus avoiding the experience of rejection

— regression, living in happier memories

— moving from one place to another and focusing one's disappointment on external factors

— blaming other people, circumstances, etc. for one's own difficulties

— looking outside oneself for reasonable explanations for one's own behavior.

However, many habits can be unlearned. Every day is an opportunity to adopt something new that can replace the old. For example, if we have believed lies, we can renounce them and start believing the truth.

Is it possible to reprogram the mind? Yes, it is. It begins with repentance, improvement, asking for forgiveness, and forgiving others. It is a matter of changing the mind, of reorienting the mind. We want to orient ourselves according to the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit is our helper in this process.

“Who knows the mind of the Lord so that he can instruct

him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16).

> "He guides us into all truth that we need. The carnal mind and its associated habits are not our only obstacle after we surrender to God. As new creations in Christ, our battle against the world, our flesh, and the enemy of our souls continues" – Dr. Neil T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, p. 62.

The enemy of our souls does not want us to understand these things, because he knows that then he will lose his battle for control of our minds.

BATTLE IN THE MIND

How do we win the battles of our minds?

— The truth revealed by God versus alternative truths.

— Knowledge of God against ignorance and superstition.

— Serving the living God against all forms of idol worship.

— Freedom in Christ against slavery and sin.

— Holiness against impurity.

— Righteousness against ungodliness.

— Christ's rule against the rule of the devil.

"He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, who is our redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

“You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

Despite these promises, we struggle with our own thoughts, feelings, and words. The conflicts did not end when we accepted Christ. Surely many have pondered this. There is a clear answer to these struggles. If God had no place in our homes and/or immediate environment during our childhood and youth, we learned to live without God’s conscious presence. In the Bible, life without God is called life in the flesh or being under the power of the flesh. Accepting Christ does not automatically remove from our minds the values, attitudes, beliefs, memories, habits, etc. that we have adopted. Everything we experienced and learned before coming to faith is engraved in our memory.

That is why Paul writes, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

How easily we slip into the ways of thinking and behaving of this world when we read, listen to, or watch programs and materials that promote the works of the devil.

1. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WORLD

With the advent of the media, the internet, and social media, the number of temptations has multiplied. The world strongly attracts us all. Our only security is to surrender ourselves daily to God's control and guidance, to read His Word, to pray, and to consciously focus our minds on His love for us.

> *An acquaintance of mine, a single mother, was a good Christian. Her son had given his life to Jesus. When he turned 17, his old friends got him to join them for parties where they used intoxicants. His father had completely abandoned his son, and in his heart he had a need to be accepted. That is why he was unable to resist his friends' suggestions.*

One evening, he stayed overnight with his friends while intoxicated. When he got up during the night to use the bathroom, he stumbled and fell, hitting his head badly. This resulted in loss of consciousness. His friends did not notice this. In the morning, they found the boy dead. The probable cause of death was internal bleeding in the brain. The boy could not have foreseen the possible consequences of the evening's events. It is unlikely that he could have imagined such a tragic outcome to their gathering.

The enemy uses even our friends to achieve his goals. The boy's mother needed someone to walk beside her through her grief. She was completely broken.

2. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FLESH

"Those who live according to the flesh have desires that are contrary to the Spirit, and those who live according to the Spirit have desires that are contrary to the flesh. The desires of the flesh are death, but the desires of the Spirit are life and peace. The desires of the flesh are hostile to God, for they do not submit to God's law, nor can they do so. Those who live according to their corrupt nature cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

"The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want" (Gal. 5:17).

This applies to many born-again Christians. They have not examined their own hearts and surrendered their hearts to God. God would like to replace them with the fruits of His Holy Spirit.

The wounded and hurt parts of the heart are quite stubborn. They easily take control of the whole person. The fleshly nature cannot be crucified until it has healed from its wounds and bruises. However, if we try to nail it to the cross,

it will not stay there, but will continue to defend itself in us or seek revenge on its offenders. The wounded parts demand compensation in the form of following the body's unclean desires. Evil spirits incite the wounded. The only path to freedom and wholeness is to forgive those who have hurt us and to acknowledge and reject our own sins.

If we want to grow into victors over the desires of the flesh, we must first experience healing in our hearts from all the injustices and sins we have experienced.

When the spirit of doubt dwells in our hearts, life seems negative to us. Doubts undermine our faith in the loving and almighty God. If the spirit of fornication dwells in us, it draws us to similar people. We cannot overcome this or any other evil spirit on our own. We always need God's help, and even then the struggle can be difficult. We must get rid of evil spirits in order to live a balanced family life. If we are possessed by the spirit of strife and meet someone who is under the same influence, we will quarrel over even the most insignificant matters. Both parties will wonder why.

For example, if a boy was raped by a man when he was a child, he will retain a homosexual spirit.

> *A man came to me who had been abused by two uncles as a child. He was now an adult and had accepted Jesus. Yet the battle in his mind continued. When he went outside his home, he might meet men who had the same spirit. He felt that they wanted to take advantage of him. We met several times. The man was finally freed from the spirit of the abuser.*

If an ancestor was a Freemason or lived in a house built by a Freemason, the same spirit continues from generation to generation. It is remarkable that those under the influence of this powerful spirit are attracted to others under the same influence. Even if reason forbids contact, this spirit strongly attracts like-minded people. Only God can free this spirit from its chains through repentance, apology, and renunciation. Depending on the power of the evil spirit, we often need the help of prayer.

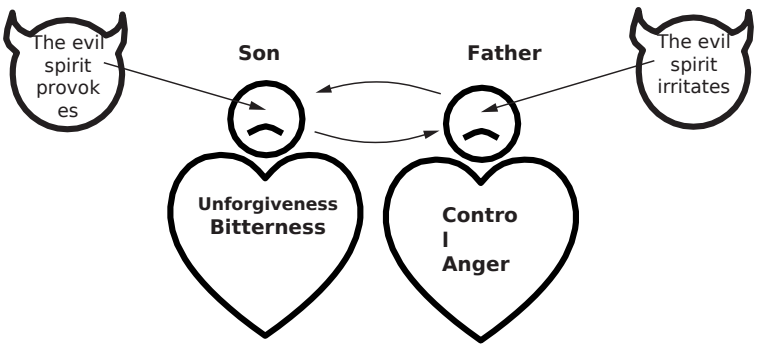
Spirits of pride and selfishness are hidden even among believers. Fortunately, we can ask for clarity on this matter. We have been promised that those who ask will receive.

I met a priest whose father was also a pastor. He often argued with his father as a child. At the age of 16, as a student short of money, he went to work as a dishwasher in a hotel kitchen. One day, the dishwasher in the hotel kitchen broke down and a repairman came to fix it. This man happened to be someone he knew from his church. The young man watched the repair.

The repairman had a bottle of alcohol in his open bag. He asked the repairman why he had the bottle with him. The repairman said he drank a little alcohol to relax. "You can have a taste of my bottle," he offered. The boy thought for a moment and was ready to try it. It felt so good that he too began to use it more regularly and in increasing amounts. Over time, he became an alcoholic.

When the effects of alcohol wore off, the bad feelings always returned worse than before. After drinking for a few years, Juma-la touched him. He made a complete turnaround and gave his life to Jesus. First, he had to face his bitterness toward his father, who had tried to control him with a heavy hand.

"How long will my worries weigh on my mind and my heart be tormented by pain? How long will my enemies triumph over me?" (Ps. 13:3).



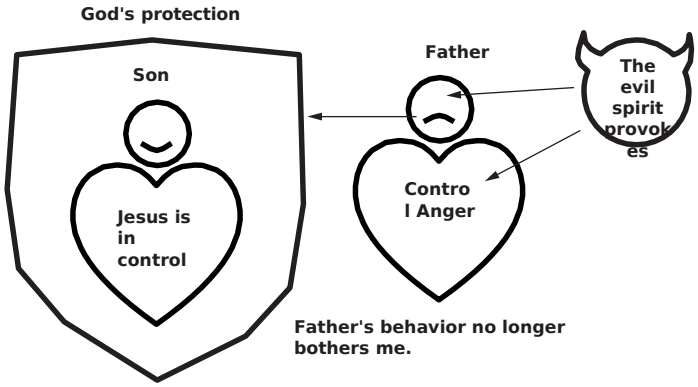
The evil spirit had a legitimate right to be irritating, because sin dwelled in his heart.

The young man was ready to choose forgiveness for his father, his mother, and others who had hurt him. He asked Ju-mal for forgiveness for his own sins.

Once his heart had been cleared, he was able to believe that he was a child of God. All his pain gradually disappeared. He felt called to study to become a pastor. He grew into an understanding pastor.

He spends his free time in harmony with his father. His father is still the same, but his grown son's heart has healed. He no longer feels the need to argue with his father.

The son gave his life to Jesus and resolved the pain in his heart, choosing forgiveness.



"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (James 3:18).

3. THE BATTLE AGAINST THE DEVIL

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. You know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:7-8).

We must learn to know our enemy so that we can prepare ourselves against his attacks. The best protection is to put on the full armor of God every day.

> "The greatest battles are fought in our minds and in our thoughts. The enemy of our souls is always interested in shaping our minds according to his own plans. His goal is to feed your thoughts with his own negative thoughts. He presents an alternative truth to the word given by God. The devil knows that the power that controls a person's world of ideas controls his entire life. That is why Paul advises in 2 Corinthians 10:5: "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." - Dr. N.T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, p. 62.

> "Large crowds will turn away from the truth of God and follow myths. This has been predicted to happen in the last days of world history. Paul wrote to Timothy about this: "The time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but, following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tell them what they want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3). That time is approaching. The truth of the Bible is rejected because it conflicts with the desires of a heart that loves the sinful world. The enemy equips people with the very errors they love. He tries to put man at the center instead of God. The enemy of souls wants to lead us away from the Word of God according to the changing opinions of people. Even spiritual leaders are in danger of being deceived by the adversary. That is why it is important to study the Bible for ourselves. The Holy Spirit is ready to guide the reader. When Christ spoke words of life, the people listened to him gladly, and many believed in him. —E.G. White, The Great Controversy, pp. 593–595.

Since we are bound to a life-and-death struggle against the kingdom of Satan, we need to protect ourselves. That is why God provides us with His own armor. Paul says, “Put on the full armor of God so that we can stand firm” (Eph. 6:11-13). Verse 13 reveals the reason: on the evil day, we must be able to resist and survive the battle while remaining standing. I have experienced the importance of this armor.

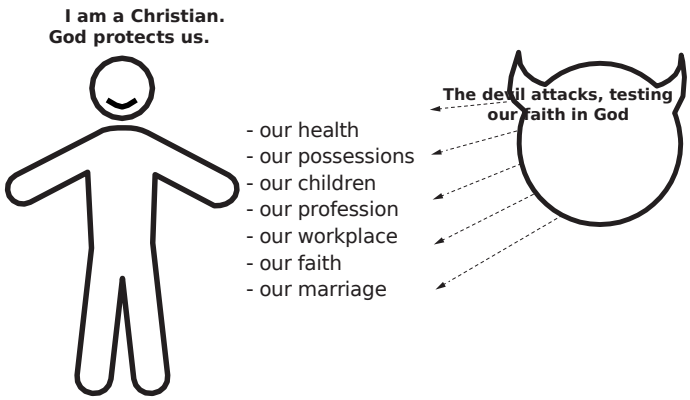
> *I treated a woman who had been consciously serving the Devil for years. God called her. She accepted God into her life and was baptized. After that, evil spirits attacked her and made her life difficult.*
>
> *She sought help but found none. Then she came to me. We met a few times, and each time the evil spirits left her. During one treatment session, she confessed to God the sins revealed by the Holy Spirit and asked God for forgiveness. After that, I commanded the evil spirits to leave in the name of Jesus and by the power of the blood. Many evil spirits left, but one turned and shot a burning arrow at my heart. The woman saw it and was frightened! About a meter from my heart, it went out! God's armor protected me. That is how I understand it.*

The evil day mentioned by Paul certainly affects all believers. Evil spirits attack every believer in Christ in some area of life.

“Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. Though I have fallen, I will rise again; though I am in darkness, the Lord is my light” (Micah 7:8).

“Whoever fears the Lord, listen to the words of the Lord’s servant. Whoever walks in deep darkness without light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on God” (Isaiah 50:10).

Can our faith withstand the trials that God allows?



“You know that when your faith is tested, it builds endurance. And endurance should lead to a complete result, so that you may be complete and whole, lacking nothing” (James 1:3-4).

In our faith, endurance strengthens our positive character traits. Endurance is like fire that burns away the dross from precious metal. It also hardens ceramics. In trials, endurance purifies, clarifies, and strengthens our faith. How we respond to difficulties reveals what kind of people we are. How has your faith been tested? What have you learned about yourself in these trials? Do you feel that life has let you down?

“My enemy persecutes my life; he tramples my life underfoot; he pushes me into darkness, among those long dead. My strength is gone, my heart is frozen” (Ps. 143:3-4).

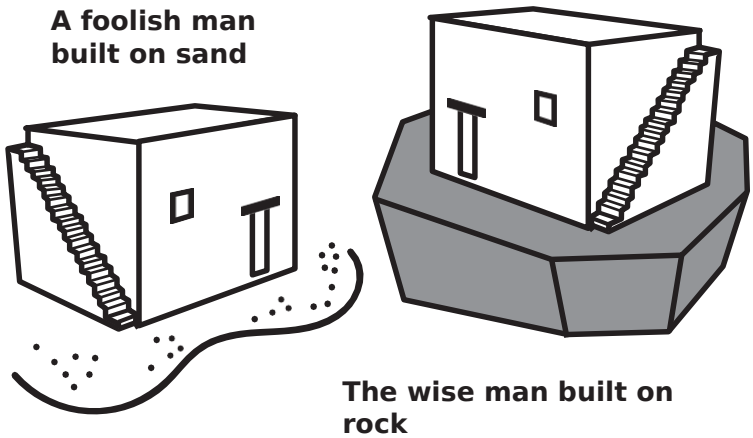
Trials cause us to reevaluate the direction of our lives. Either your fighting spirit increases and your faith is strengthened, or despair begins to weigh on your mind. At that point, it is good to stop and open your heart to God. He always has

something encouraging to say to you. He Himself will help you find the right direction for your life. He knows the way out of disappointment.

Have you recently experienced a great disappointment? Have you asked God for comfort and guidance? Bad days come to everyone sooner or later. This is due to the enemy's diligence and hatred.

“Although he was a Son, he had to learn obedience through suffering” (Hebrews 5:8). If even Jesus had to learn obedience through suffering, it is unlikely that we can learn it without suffering. Pain is the best teacher!

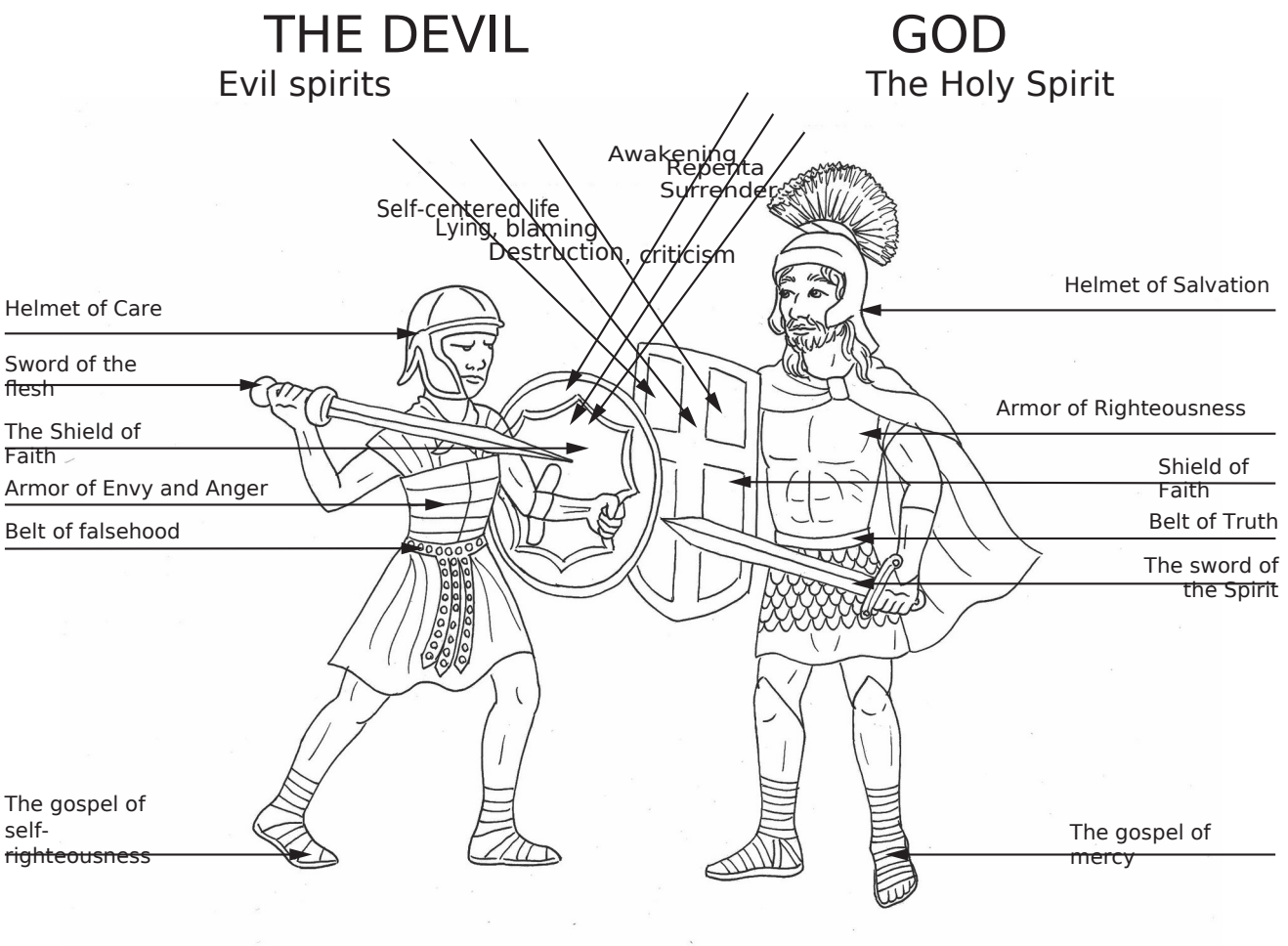
“Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matt. 7:24-27).



These men faced the same trials in their lives, but only one of their houses withstood them. The difference was in the foundation of their houses.

The Bible does not promise that as Christians we will

somehow avoid so-called bad days. That is why we need God's armor, which protects us from head to toe.


THE DEVIL
Evil spirits
GOD
The Holy Spirit
Awakening
Repenta
Surrender
Self-centered life
Lying, blaming
Destruction, criticism
Helmet of Care
Sword of the flesh
The Shield of Faith
Armor of Envy and Anger
Belt of falsehood
The gospel of self-righteousness
Helmet of Salvation
Armor of Righteousness
Shield of Faith
Belt of Truth
The sword of the Spirit
The gospel of mercy

THE DEVIL'S WAR GEAR

Weapons used by the devil:

HELMET OF WORRIES

Today's worries prevent us from seeing into the future.

> "Many hearts sigh under the weight of worries because they strive to live according to the standards of the world around them. They serve the world. They have taken on its worries and adopted its ways. This corrupts their character and weighs down their lives. In satisfying their ambition and worldly desires, they violate their conscience and burden themselves with a load of guilt. Constant worries consume their vitality. The Lord would have them cast off this yoke of bondage." —E.G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 329.

Our hearts should be freed from everything that prevents us from being faithful to God. We often need the help of prayer for this.

THE ARMOR OF ENVY AND ANGER

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" (1 Peter 2:1). "Do not fret because of evildoers; be not envious of those who do wrong" (Psalm 37:1). "See how many enemies I have! Their hatred is violent and cruel" (Ps. 25:19). "Hatred drives people against each other, but love covers a multitude of sins" (Prov. 10:12).

> A jealous person closes their eyes to other people's good qualities and noble deeds. They are always ready to belittle others and portray even good things in a bad light. Usually, people overlook each other's mistakes, but a jealous person does not. Jealousy means that someone else is better than me in some way. My pride does not want to accept that. If you point out

their problem, their resistance to change can be fierce. Envy is a mental poison. It can separate friends, stir up hatred, and incite rebellion against God." - E.G. White, Testimonies 5, p. 56.

"Whoever gives room for hatred in his heart steps onto the path of murder. Even his prayers are an abomination to God. Murder is first committed in the mind. Whatever the reason may be for a person to open his heart to hatred or revenge, he is at the same time opening his heart to the Devil. Bitterness and hatred are contrary to heaven." - E.G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 310-311.

THE BELT OF LIES

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25).

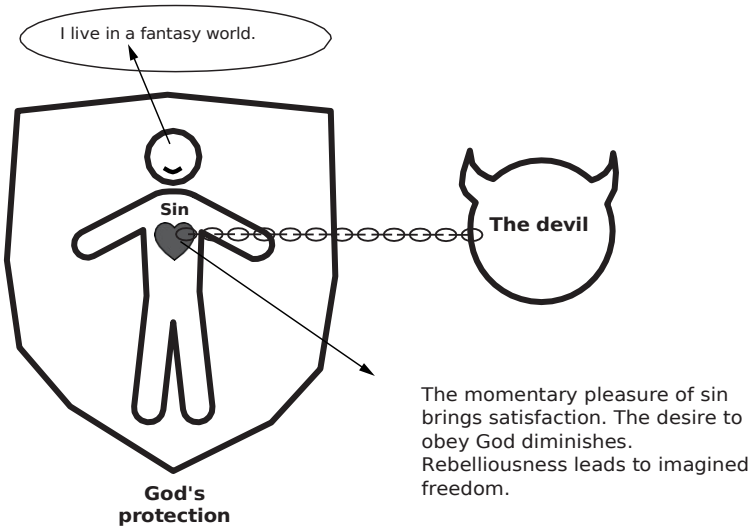
"You are from Satan. He is your father, and you want to satisfy his desires. Satan has been a murderer from the beginning. He is far from the truth; it is foreign to him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

"This is what the Lord says: 'Because Judah has committed one crime after another, I will not change my mind. They have rejected my laws and have not kept my commands. They have been led astray by the same false gods their ancestors followed'" (Amos 2:4).

Every time we allow our selfishness to dictate our choices, sin gains more ground to rule.

"You know that when you offer yourselves to someone as slaves to obey him, you are slaves to the one you obey. Either you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or you are slaves to God, which leads to righteousness" (Romans 6:16).

Repeatedly acting against God's will strengthens our thinking in that direction. Breaking those habits becomes more difficult over the years. When we choose to sin, we may regret it afterwards. Without a clear change of direction in our lives, we fall into the same trap again and again. The devil likes to convince us that we are hopeless cases. He urges us to give up. What happens then?


I live in a fantasy world.
Sin
The devil
The momentary pleasure of sin brings satisfaction. The desire to obey God diminishes. Rebelliousness leads to imagined freedom.
God's protection

The consequences of sin:

— **Guilt.** “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions” (Ps. 51:3).

— **Loss of joy.** “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me the joyful spirit to lead me forward” (Ps. 51:14).

— **Pain and sickness.** "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away. Day after day I cried out in my pain. Night and day your hand weighed heavily on me. My strength was sapped like moisture in the heat of summer” (Ps. 32:3-4).

— **Breaking life.** “Lord, do not punish me in your anger, do not discipline me in your wrath! Your arrows have pierced me, your hand has pressed me to the ground. There is no soundness in my body, because you are angry with me. Because of my sins, my bones have no peace. The burden of my sins is too heavy for me; it is too heavy for me to bear. My wounds are festering and stinking—it is because of my foolishness. I am bent over, twisted out of shape. From morning till night I walk in gloom. My loins are on fire, there is no soundness in my body. I am at the end of my strength, broken, my heart cries out in pain. Lord, you know what I need, my sighs have

reached your ears. My heart trembles, my strength is ebbing, the light of my eyes is fading" (Ps. 38:2-11).

— **Various fears.** "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1).

— **Addictions.** "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin'" (John 8:34).

— **A broken relationship with God.** "O disobedient children, says the Lord. They make plans without consulting me, they form alliances without regard for my will, and thus add sin upon sin" (Isaiah 30:1). "The Lord's arm is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. No, it is your sins that separate you from your God. Your sins have turned him away, so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

— **Open the doors of your heart to the Devil.** "I wrote to you to test you and to see if you are obedient in everything. Whom you forgive, I also forgive; and when I have forgiven, if there is anything to forgive, I have done so for your sake before Christ, so that Satan might not gain an advantage over us. For we are well acquainted with his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:9-11).

— **Turning your gaze away from God.** "Sin whispers in the heart of the wicked, so that they do not fear God" (Ps. 36:2).

— **Blind to their own faults.** "Sin blinds their eyes so that they cannot see or hate their faults" (Ps. 36:3).

— **Pride.** "With every word they speak, they sin. Let their pride lead them into a trap; they have hurled curses and lies" (Ps. 59:13).

— **It causes grief to God.** "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

— **It takes away courage.** "My little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth. By this we know that we are in the truth, and we will reassure our hearts before him if our hearts condemn us. God is

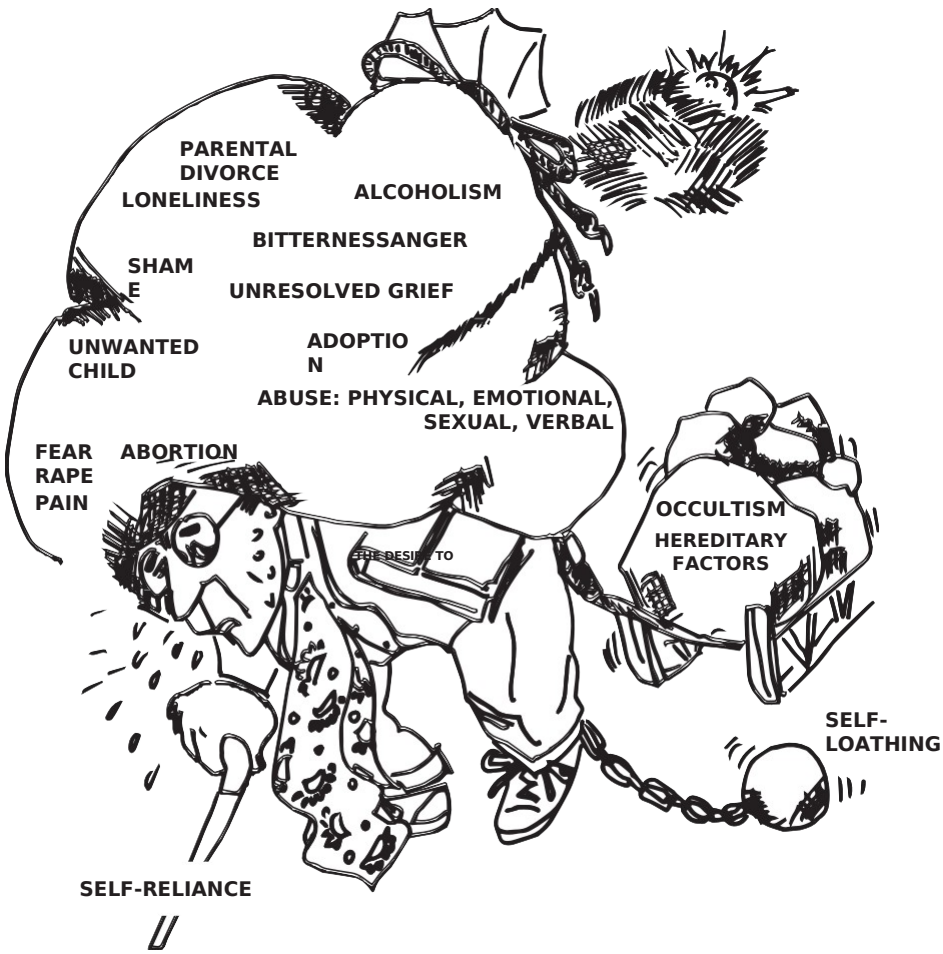
greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we can boldly approach God" (1 John 3:18-21).

Quenching the work of the Holy Spirit. "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19).

Thess. 5:19).

The devil wins when we believe that temptation and sin are impossible to resist. We must remember that we act according to our beliefs. If we believe we will fall into sin, it will likely happen. If we believe we are prisoners of our problems, that too will come true. We are powerless in the face of sin.



“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Weights are not sin, but they can lead to sin. They make it hard to live, let alone run.

Burdened people come to churches seeking help. They are willing to do anything to get rid of their burdens. Unfortunately, the help they need is often not available. I have met people who have been blamed for their poor relationship with God because they are still burdened by childhood traumas, family curses, and evil spirits.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). English translation: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”).

We can be freed from the burdens of our family and our sinful patterns. The solution is Truth.

— **The truth about ourselves.** When I give my life to Jesus, I become a child of God. “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to become children of God, to all who believe in his name” (John 1:12).

— **The truth about a** world where the Devil has a firm foothold through lies and deceit. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10).

— **The truth about God.** “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

At Golgotha, Jesus defeated all the forces of evil and gives us His victory to build us up. We do not need to serve sin, because it has already been defeated. “You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

The only way to eternal life is through faith in Christ’s atoning death on the cross for us. When we understand even a little of this sacrifice, we want to obey God’s will out of love

for Him.

“Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless, who follow the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who keep his covenant and seek him with all their heart” (Ps. 119:1-2).

Every time we obey the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we receive the power to control ourselves and our lives.

THE SHIELD OF DOUBT/UNBELIEF

“Finally, Jesus appeared to his eleven disciples while they were eating. He rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him after he had risen from the dead” (Mark 16:14).

“That is true. They were cut off because of their unbelief, but you remain because of your faith. Nevertheless, do not be arrogant, but be afraid! If God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. See how God is both kind and severe. He is severe toward those who have fallen away, but kind toward you if you remain faithful to his goodness; otherwise, you too will be cut off. But even those others will be grafted in again, unless they remain in their unbelief, for God is able to graft them back into the trunk” (Rom. 11:20-23).

“Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest any of you have an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to the reality we have entered into from the beginning. The Scriptures say: "If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. Who were those who did this: they heard but rebelled? All those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses. With whom was God angry for forty years? With those who sinned and whose bodies were left in the desert. To whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest? To those who did not obey. We see that unbelief prevented them from reaching their destination (Hebrews 3:12-19).

> “Doubt and unbelief are effective weapons of Satan. Even in God's work, mistrust and jealousy arise. These things prepare the way for the enemy's deception. Bitter feelings arise against those who dare to confront their mistakes and rebuke them for their sins." - E.G. White, Selected Messages 2, p. 353.

> “Doubt and unbelief must be confessed to God and forgiven by Him. They should not be harbored in the heart, for they undermine trust in God. Even angels turn away from unbelievers with sorrow. Evil spirits rejoice when unbelief takes root in the hearts of those who have already received faith. The showers of God's blessings are weakened when doubts grow stronger. God seeks to stop us from unbelief, sometimes through difficult experiences. God is only waiting to be merciful to us when we choose Him in our lives. He does the work of change and purification in our hearts according to His own will. - E.G. White, Testimonies 1, pp. 430-431.

THE SWORD OF FLESH

Our own strength and abilities cannot change our hearts, nor enable us to obey God's will. Our own efforts are tainted by selfishness and sin.

God's grace, conveyed by the Holy Spirit, can cleanse us. We cannot earn our salvation in any way, not even through strict obedience. It is God's gift to imperfect people who love Him. Striving for obedience is a result of accepting Christ.

THE "GOSPEL" OF OUR OWN WORKS

I have met many preachers who trust in their own works. They seek to gain followers. It is likely that they have not personally experienced God's undeserved mercy in their hearts.

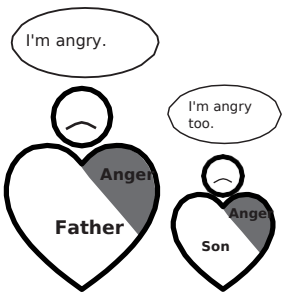
Their backgrounds may be traumatic. For example, a tense atmosphere at home, emotional poverty in the family, a hostile relationship with their father, or hurtful experiences in childhood.

STYLE OF SPEECH

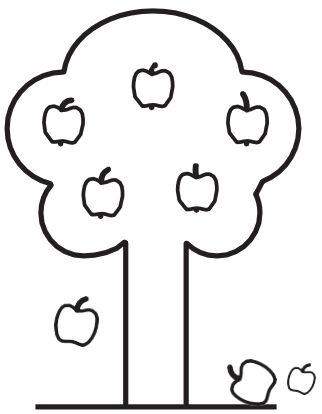
“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not bridle his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless” (James 1:26).

In pastoral care situations, I have met Christians who, when angry, use language that is inappropriate for believers. Spiritual life is not in order if the use of language is inappropriate.

> *I met a man who said he was a believer. He tried to do his best in his relationship with God and his family. They visited a family they knew who had children of the same age. As it was a hot day, the children went to play in the pool. The parents stayed inside to talk. They began to hear arguing from outside. The children were arguing, and the visiting children were swearing. The father of the visiting family went outside and scolded the children, swearing at them. For these children, swearing was a natural way of communicating in arguments.*



After learning, he became like his teacher.
Luke 6:40; Psalm 37:8.



The apple doesn't fall far from the tree!

“A student is not above his teacher, but when he is fully trained, he will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

The evil spirits hidden in the heart often express themselves through speech. Sometimes words come out of the mouth quite automatically. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

These spirits include bitterness, lust, pride, fear, anger, sadness, stinginess, and unbelief. As a result of the presence of these spirits, we may curse, lie, fear, complain, or discuss immoral things. Evil spirits in other people easily recognize each other and unite by expressing themselves in conversations, for example.

The enemy of our souls likes to control our tongues and use them to trap us. “If your own words have ensnared you, your promises have trapped you” (Proverbs 6:2).

Speaking evil of others grieves the Holy Spirit. We should not put others down with our words, but rather encourage and support them. Paul advises the Ephesians: “Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whom you have received to seal you for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:29-30).

Suggested prayer:

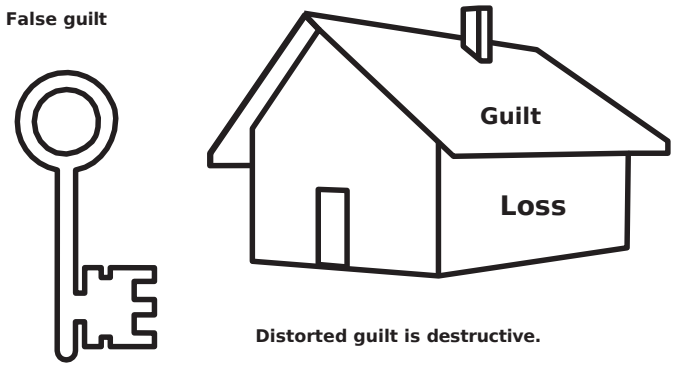
> *“Dear Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, Your Son, I come to You asking for help to control my tongue. I confess to You the sins of my tongue and repent of my words. Forgive me and cleanse my heart with the blood of Jesus. I command all evil spirits to leave me in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood. Today, I surrender my whole heart to You. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and teach me to choose my words more carefully. I choose to use my tongue in a way that honors God and other people. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*

"My heart is filled with joy when your words are true and right" (Proverbs 23:16). "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself from trouble" (Proverbs 21:23).

"For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10-12).

BLAMING

One of Satan's most effective weapons is guilt. Often the Devil tempts us into sin and then mercilessly blames us for it.



"I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, 'Now salvation has come, and power and glory and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. Now the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, the one who accuses them day and night before our God' (Rev. 12:10).

The accuser of our brothers is the Devil. His main purpose is to accuse those who believe in Christ. As long as we listen to his accusations, we are bound by guilt. He tries to direct our gaze to our own weaknesses and failures, rather than to the merits of Christ.

A middle-aged woman came to me, I will call her Marja. Marja had grown up in a violent home. Her mother did not accept her. She had to do hard work even as a child. Beatings were a daily occurrence. The punishment was not proportionate to the child's actions. Marja's heart was broken. She left home at a young age, falling in love with a domineering man.

The pattern of her childhood continued into her adult life. She had three children. When Marja finally grew tired of her husband's behavior, she moved with her children to another municipality. There she met a man, fell in love, and got married, which resulted in another child. When she married, she did not know that her husband served evil spirits. Life began to feel heavy, and Marja suffered a nervous breakdown. At this point in her life, she began to read the Bible and pray to God. Her husband did not approve of his wife's interest in matters of faith. Marja read the Bible in secret.

A few years later, her husband became seriously ill and died. Marja moved in with her youngest child. The other children had already left home. Marja sought a spiritual home and found a church where she felt comfortable. She was expected to speak in tongues as a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence. Marja continued her search. In another church, rock music blared and people had fun. Luke 19:46 came to her mind: "He (Jesus) said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer," but you have made it a den of thieves.

After a while, Marja met two women with whom she talked. The women invited her to their church service. One of the women

wanted to be Marja's spiritual advisor. Difficulties began in Marja's life. The woman began to criticize Marja, saying things like "You talk too much. You don't listen to me enough. You are too proud. You need to change and do as I say."

Once again, there was a controlling person in Marja's life who sought to destroy her self-esteem. Everything was done in the name of Christianity. The Bible says that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, not control over others. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Eph. 5:22-23).

I had met Marja before. She called me and asked for help. I advised Marja to distance herself from the woman, but she did not want to let go of Marja. After receiving a judgmental and accusatory letter from her advisor, Marja became depressed. I got to read the letter. I couldn't believe that a Christian could write such a thing.

A few days later, the woman came to Marja and continued her accusations. Marja told her to leave without returning. This person was sent by the enemy of souls, whose purpose was to destroy Marja's budding faith and health.

I talked with Marja, and we prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Things from Marja's childhood rose up from her subconscious, revealing the false beliefs that were in her mind. Every day, the enemy of her soul accused her of different things. For example 'You are worthless; you will go to hell; you are good for nothing; you are a bad mother; God does not accept you; you are too sinful, etc.' Marja believed that these thoughts were her own and did not know how to get rid of them. She felt like she had a defective CD playing the same accusations over and over again!

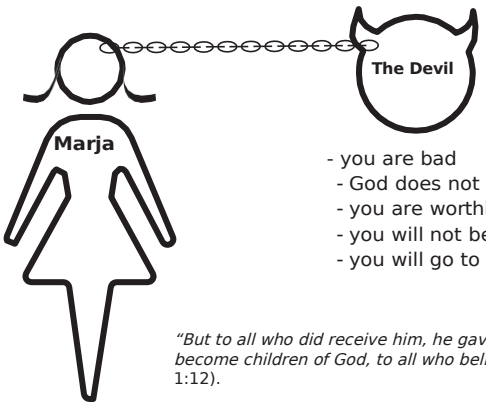
I explained to Marja the difference between justified and distorted guilt. Justified guilt arises as a consequence of sin. We can

confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and be freed from them. Distorted guilt undermines our minds.

I taught her that the Devil had planted his own thoughts in her mind. I advised her to close her mind to distorted, guilt-inducing thoughts and

to command evil spirits to leave in the name of Jesus, speaking aloud.

The Devil readily offers his own thoughts:



"But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to become children of God, to all who believe in him" (John 1:12).

Marja also harbored hatred toward her mother, self-hatred, and other binding spirits in her heart. Marja humbly confessed her sins, which the Holy Spirit revealed to her, and asked God for forgiveness. After that, I assured her with 1 John 1:9. I prayed and, with the authority given by Jesus, commanded all evil spirits to leave her in the name of Christ and by the power of His blood. I also asked God to break all curses in her family in the name of Jesus. I also prayed that God would break the distorted family patterns, attitudes, values, and ways of thinking and separate from her everything that was not of God.

I also prayed that God would break all the soul ties related to sexual promiscuity. I also commanded the spirit of immorality to leave Marja. Finally, I prayed that God would fill her heart with something new and beautiful that would bring blessing to her life.

> *Her burden was lifted, and she returned home feeling relieved. Marja came to see me a few more times. She grew as a Christian, and her relationship with God was strengthened. She wants to study the Bible every day and grow stronger in her faith. She has learned to resist the enemy of her soul in her thoughts.*

It is important to get evil spirits out of a person. Another thing is to guide them to live in reverence of God, such as

- advising him on how to resist the attacks of the Devil in everyday life
- guide them to set boundaries in their own lives and distinguish between their own responsibilities and those of others
- teach them to accept themselves, because God accepts us despite our shortcomings
- encourage them to think about the consequences of their choices in advance; God is ready to guide them, and prayer can strengthen their decisions
- assure them that when they fall, their faith life suffers and they should immediately repent, make amends, and ask God for forgiveness
- Seek confirmation in God's word, e.g., 1 John 1:9.

We are not always able to distinguish between justified and distorted guilt. Children feel guilty about their parents' arguments or divorce. I have treated many children who have suffered from their parents' divorce. "If I had been nicer, they wouldn't have divorced!" Similarly, many parents feel guilty about the wrong choices made by their adult children. Children who have grown up and moved away from their childhood home are responsible for their own lives. I believe that every parent does their best for their children with the resources they have.

In my childhood, I was the black sheep of my family. I began to believe that I was to blame for things that had nothing to do with me. That belief stayed with me well into adulthood.

> *I treated a middle-aged woman who had suffered greatly from false guilt. She realized that God could break her unnecessary guilt and replace it with the dignity of being a child of God. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).*

Others blame their spouse for their wrong choices. Some people in marriage can be so selfish and stubborn that they won't listen to anyone. Your spouse doesn't have to feel guilty about that!

Some people who have experienced divorce feel guilty about the separation, even though they did not want it. If one spouse has a spirit of lust or fornication, or is immature for marriage, the other spouse is not responsible for this. The spouse in question may behave in such a way that life together is not possible.

Distorted guilt is a deception of the enemy of the soul to capture people's minds. If we believe his lies, we lack the power of faith in the battles of our minds.

Do not believe everything you hear!

James 1:19; Mark 4:24; Ecclesiastes 5:1.

The Devil

John 10:8,26
1 John 4:5
Isa. 42:17-20
Jer. 6:10,18,19

Holy Spirit

Proverbs 22:17
Isa. 55:3
Matthew 13:13-16 Luke 10:16
John 5:25,30
John 8:47
John 10:3,4,27,28
1 John 4:6
Rev. 3:20

Accusation is the most frequent and persistent attack of the devil.

Zech. 3:1,2; Rev. 12:10.

How important is it to learn to resist the enemy's constant accusations?

It is essential for daily victories in Christ. Each of us has experienced feelings of worthlessness at some point. When we feel worthless, we behave accordingly. In such cases, our lives and our testimony of God suffer until we resist the devil and gain victory in our minds. But the enemy never lets up. He tries to depress us even more and keeps our minds subjugated longer by bombarding us with new accusations. If we fail to resist him, we become even more vulnerable to even more serious accusations.

Thoughts have a powerful influence on our lives. “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:23). “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:8).

We must learn to capture every thought. Don’t believe anything the Devil says about you. Those are lies. Believe everything God says about you. That is the truth. And His truth sets you free. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins until we confess them (1 John 1:9). If, after your confession, the same sin keeps coming back to your mind, it is not the Holy Spirit who is bringing it up, but the Devil. “Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

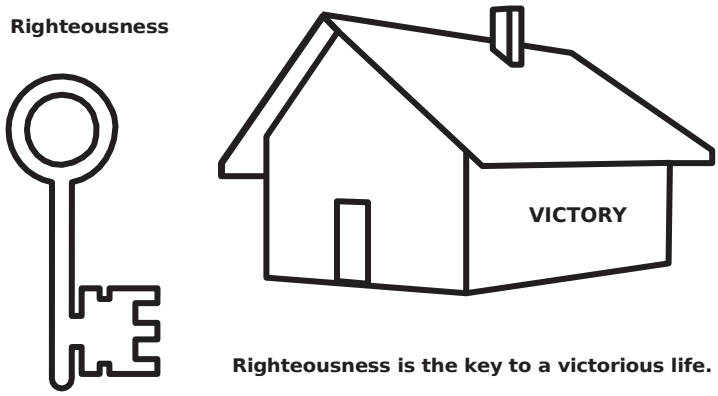
Have you experienced thoughts fed by the Devil? Think carefully about the thoughts that come to your mind. Who is speaking to you? God's words are always constructive, while the Devil's words are destructive!

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE KEY TO VICTORY

Justified guilt knocks on our conscience when we have fallen into sin. Guilt is then our friend, reminding us of God's mercy toward sinners. When we choose humility, confession, repentance, and asking forgiveness from God and, if

necessary, from others, we are freed from the burden of guilt. See 1 John 1:9.

If the Devil reminds you of a forgiven sin, resist him by saying, “Go argue with Jesus. I no longer have anything to do with that sin.” Christ's death on the cross applies to our past, present, and future.



Righteousness is the key to a victorious life.

“You were dead because of your transgressions and your uncircumcision, but God made you alive together with Christ. He forgave us all our transgressions, canceled the debt that stood against us with all its regulations, and nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:13-14). This promise gives us hope. Christ died for us and earned us eternal life. On the basis of His Son’s innocent blood, God has every right to forgive the sins of those who repent.

“God himself was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

God’s love led to a magnificent exchange in our favor. Jesus was made guilty in our place. We received the right to live as children of God on the basis of Christ’s righteousness. The devil did not

We can do nothing about this matter when we commit ourselves to Christ and His work of reconciliation on our behalf. The enemy's weapons were stripped away at Golgotha.

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15).

The entire universe witnessed God’s solution to the problem of sin. He defeated the forces of evil in battle with his once-for-all sacrifice. Christ himself did not need this victory. He sacrificed himself for our salvation. His love and compassion for us is incomprehensible!

Paul writes: “Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

When we understand this promise, our hearts are filled with gratitude for God's mercy and love. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. Before the world was created, he chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in his sight, sharing in Christ. In his love, he decided to bring us into his family, to be his own children, because of Jesus Christ. Praise be to the glory of his grace, for having given us his beloved Son! In Christ's blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins” (Eph. 1:3-7).

God wants us to share our joy in Christ's victory over the power of the devil.

Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

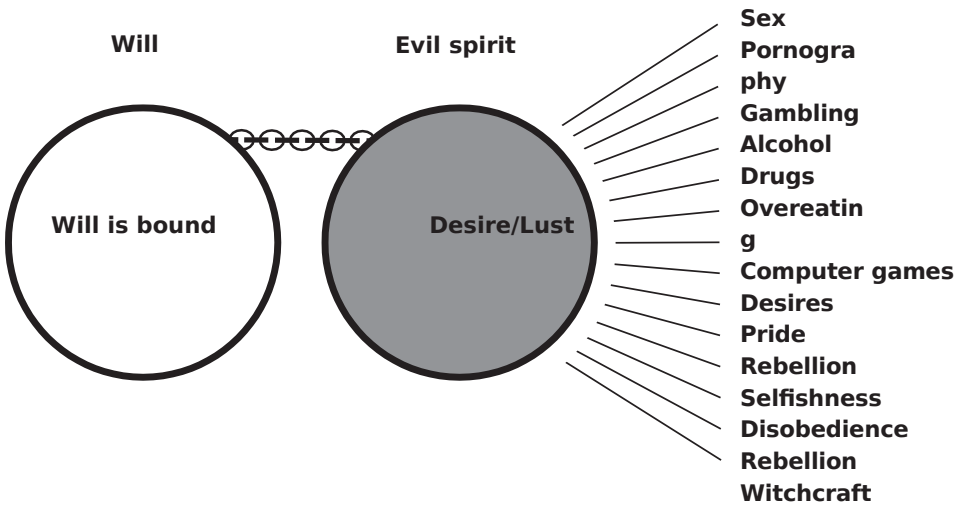
The devil's power in the world has thus been transferred to Christ. The crucifixion legally transferred power to Christ both in heaven and on earth. What does this mean for us here and now? Jesus says, "I have regained my authority. Go in my name and do what I tell you to do! Go and show my victory to the whole world."

We now have a responsibility to appeal to Christ's victory in our own lives and in the lives of others. Are we ready for that?

THE DEVIL'S DECEPTIONS

The evil spirit that controls the mind is called the "octopus," which has many suffocating tentacles. Spirits that control the mind can enter the mind through, for example, music inspired by evil spirits, occult books, pornography, anti-God teachings and religions, drugs, and passivity.

Many evil spirits are associated with the following things:



The activities of spirits that attack our minds, e.g.:

- mind control
- confusion of the mind
- nervous breakdowns
- insanity
- fits of rage
- fanaticism
- escape into fantasies
- mental anguish
- brooding over negative thoughts.

When people are spiritually asleep, the enemy of the soul sows thorns, evil, and sin even among believers. This happens “when anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the devil comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart” (Matt. 13:19).

If we do not watch and be led by the Holy Spirit, the Devil will fill us with his own spirit and lead us to do his deeds.

To avoid this, we can choose to surrender daily to God's control and ask for His guidance in our lives. When we neglect prayer and the study of God's Word, we begin to rely on our own strength. This attitude opens the door to the temptations and seductions of the Devil. He has a powerful influence on people's minds. No one can live on neutral ground. "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:30).

> Neglecting prayer leads people to rely on their own strength and opens the door to temptation. Many people's imaginations have been captured by scientific research, and they are impressed by the power that their own understanding gives them. The sciences that deal with the mind are highly regarded. Of course, they have their own important place; the Devil also seeks to cling to caregivers and use them to deceive people. These sciences can be used to nullify virtues and open the door to evil spirits. The enemy of the soul also uses other people as his assistants. The target often does not realize what is going on. God has warned believers to beware of this trap. The enemy is a master deceiver, and even God's own people are not always guided by the Holy Spirit in their lives. For thousands of years, the enemy of souls has studied the human mind and learned its mechanisms well. He does this so deceitfully that people who do not understand fall more and more under his control. The devil seeks to confuse people's minds so that they will not listen to other voices" - E.G. White, Selected Messages 2, pp. 352-353.

In my work, I have met many people who are controlled by the enemy of their souls. In the name of Christ, I have rebuked evil spirits. The devil cannot forcibly take control of the human mind.

A woman came to me because she wanted to give her life to God. Something in her resisted this decision. We talked about her life, her childhood, and her parents' role models. As an adult, she became interested in the occult. Difficulties began to arise in her life, which strengthened her decision to follow God.

I encouraged the woman by talking about the free will God has given us, which allows us to change the direction of our lives...

God does not force anyone. We can choose whether to accept Him into our lives. The devil compulsively tries to control us in order to keep our lives under his control. If you find it difficult to submit your will to God, other forces will control it.

... The will can be broken in childhood through various forms of rejection, overly harsh discipline, etc. I assured the woman that before she could make her final choice for God, her will had to be freed from the control of evil spirits.

The work began with forgiveness for the woman's controlling mother, who did not allow her children to make their own choices. Her will did not develop normally, but remained rebellious in her heart. We prayed for the sword of the Holy Spirit to break the woman's will from her mother's control through the power of Jesus' name and blood. After that, she was ready to confess her own sins, including involvement in the occult, and ask God for forgiveness. The sword of the Holy Spirit freed the woman's will from the Devil's subjugation and control.

She was also ready to break free from other bonds that were binding her soul. She

wanted to make room for God's work in her heart. We prayed for her heart to receive the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name.

burden was lifted from her shoulders, and she felt inner freedom. The Holy Spirit filled her heart, and she was filled with joy.

He now chooses God as the Lord of his life every day. Sometimes evil spirits surround and torment him with their lies. If he feels he cannot cope on his own, he calls me and we pray together for freedom from the lies of the Devil. If we have served the forces of darkness and later want to choose God for our lives, the battle can be fierce. In that case, it is good to ask other Christians for prayer support.

The enemy of our souls uses evil angels, other people, and various situations to work against us. These people may act alone, in groups, or within a larger organization. Formally, these organizations may even be disguised as religious ones.

A man came to me who was separated from his wife, his infant child, and his other children. He found his life painful. During our conversation, it became clear that both he and his father were Freemasons. I told him that, in my opinion, this global organization did not originate with God. He was convinced that its roots went back to the time of King Solomon. The first Freemasons cut stones for Solomon's temple. They all have a Freemason Bible, which he showed me the next time we met.

I urged the man to go to the leaders of this organization and ask them if they respect God and Christ. He did so without receiving a clear answer to his questions. Surprised, he searched the internet for answers. Father and son discussed the matter. The son came to

the conclusion that he had been deceived. He left

the organization. We talked about it several times. After that, the man returned home to his family. The whole family rejoiced at the father's return home. He was now a free, happy, pleasant man who had been deceived.

Often, the people the Devil uses against us are our friends or even members of our family. If we do not watch and maintain a personal relationship with God according to the Bible, the Devil will also use us, you and me, for his own plans.

Peter is an example of how a friend can unwittingly try to prevent God's plans from being fulfilled. Peter was a faithful disciple of Jesus. “From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would rise from the dead. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: "God forbid! This must not happen to you, Lord!” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man” (Matt. 16:21-23).

Jesus prepared his disciples for his future fate. They found it shocking. They had expected a completely different future for Jesus, as the king of Israel. Peter could not accept what he heard. His immediate response was well-intentioned, and he believed in his own position. In reality, the Devil took advantage of the situation to prevent God's plan from being fulfilled through Peter's reaction. Peter had false ideas about the purpose of Jesus' life.

After the Devil failed to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, he tried again through Peter to turn Jesus away from God's plan of salvation.

"Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. Then the tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. ' But Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of

God. Then the devil took Jesus

to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple. He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you. They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, and said, "All this I will give you if you will kneel before me and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’” Then the Devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him” (Matt. 4:1-11).

> Peter was unaware of Satan's presence and control. He did not realize that the enemy was speaking through him. Does this also happen today? Definitely. I myself have heard many stories from people I have met about how the Devil has used their mouths to insult those around them. Only afterwards do they say they realized what they had done and were horrified by their own words. If there is a spirit of accusation in the heart, it will attack even innocent people. If there is unconsciously room in the heart for fear, bitterness, anger, disappointment, or control over others, these will come out in the use of language, targeting innocent people with emotional attacks. — Vaugh Allen, Victory on the Battlefield, pp. 27–28.

> “If believers neglect their spiritual life and do not nourish it with God’s word and prayer, the adversary is ready to fill the empty space in their hearts with his own spirit. As a result, a Christian who drifts away from God begins to act as an agent of the Devil in his life.” – E.G. White, Selected Messages 2, p. 353.

My reader, if your will is bound and you do not feel free to make your own decisions, you need the prayer support of both God and other Christians. The good news is that we can choose to break free from all these burdens weighing on our minds.

Break free from the control of other people and the Devil. “But not as I will, but as You will” (Luke 22:42).

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus, I come before You and choose to break free from all control, manipulation, and domination by evil spirits and other people. I no longer want to be bound to anything other than You, God. I renounce all desires, such as pride, rebellion, stubbornness, disobedience, insubordination, and the spirit of witchcraft, that bind my will. I commit myself only to Your will, God. I thank Christ for His love and help. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.*

Renounce all attacks directed at your mind! You are what you think. If the Devil gains control of your mind, he controls your life.

Suggested prayer:

> *In the name of Jesus, I choose to break free from the spirits that control my mind, the confusion, the bondage of the mind, the delusions, the rage, the fantasy world, the passivity, the rationalization, the ignorance, the bonds of the mind, the lusts, and the evil thoughts. In the name of Jesus, I pray this, amen.”*

Renounce fear! Fear is a paralyzing spirit that binds people in many different areas of life. This spirit manifests itself in different ways. For example, fear of rejection, self-rejection, fear of being hurt, fear of authority, fear of witchcraft, fear of failure in one's profession, fear of death, fear of failure in different areas of life, fear of the future, fear of responsibility, fear of the dark, fear of being alone, fear of what people think

or say about us, fear of hell, fear of evil spirits, fear of poverty, timidity.

All of the above, if they occur in your life, should be cut off in the name of Jesus.

Suggested prayer:

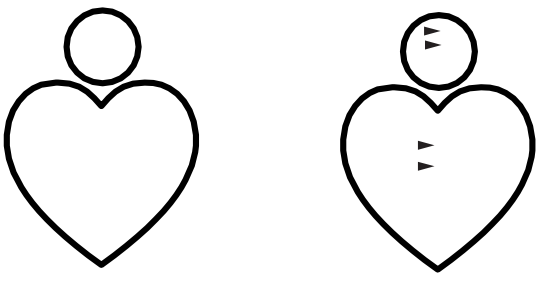
> *"In the name of Jesus, I choose to break free from all fears: childhood fears, traumatic fears, fears of the past, and also all inherited fears. I pray in the name of Jesus, amen."*
>
> - John Eckhardt, Spiritual Warfare, Manual, pp. 41, 43.

FORMS OF SELF-DECEPTION

> *My late uncle believed he was a good Christian because he knew his Bible and gave speeches. His life proved otherwise. He did not live according to the instructions he gave to others. His sermons lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. Appealing only to reason does not reach anyone's heart.*

Understanding that comes from the heart is based on experience and touches the listener's heart.

Reason appeals to reason, and emotion appeals to feelings.



The speaker should ask God, “Can I stand behind my words based on my own experience? If not, it is important to honestly tell the listeners that you yourself are struggling with the issues you mention. None of us are perfect. We all still need to grow in our Christian life.

“If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Gal. 6:3). “For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think soberly, according to the measure of faith that God has assigned to each of you” (Rom. 12:3). God has given him" (Rom. 12:3).

According to the Bible, we should not think too highly of ourselves. Arrogant people are confident in their ability to control their own lives.

> *A man came to me and told me what a wonderful spouse he was in supporting his family in various ways. During our conversation, I wondered if everything he said was true. His words and body language seemed to contradict each other. Some time later, I met his Christian wife, who told me something completely different about her husband. She was planning to divorce him, and later did so. The man had been deceived by the enemy, but he himself was unaware of it.*

The life we now live and the resources we have received are not our own achievements. They are expressions of God's grace. When we use the gifts we have received, the credit belongs to God, not to us.

“Let no one deceive himself. If any of you think you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s

sight. As it is written:
'He catches the wise in their own craftiness' (1 Cor. 3:18-19).

The wisdom of this world without God focuses on intelligence. "They claim to be wise, but they have become fools" (Rom. 1:22).

“Do not rely on your own understanding, but trust in the Lord with all your heart. Wherever you go, keep him in mind, and he will guide you on the right path. Do not think you are wise; fear the Lord and shun evil. This is medicine for your whole body” (Proverbs 3:5-8).

When Christ has room in our hearts, we receive heavenly wisdom from him.

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). We are not sinless saints but sinful saints in God’s eyes. It is possible for us to fall because sin dwells in our mortal bodies. God expects us to face our mistakes and sins openly and honestly and confess them to Him. We deceive ourselves if we do not do this, because over time, unresolved issues can easily lead us astray.

If we are unaware of our shortcomings or weaknesses, we can always ask God for help. The Holy Spirit will tell us what stands between us and God.

When unresolved sins begin to accumulate in our conscience, the voice of the Holy Spirit also fades away. We are expected to be reconciled with people and with God. Every day, we can choose to humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness before God. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

There are alcoholics who do not admit their problem until they have lost everything because of their drinking: their job, their family, their home, and their money. An unconfessed sin is like cancer. If it is detected early, the person's life expectancy is good. Without treatment, the prognosis worsens over time. As we live in the light of the Bible, we are accountable to God for our choices. Being alert and honestly examining our own lives can protect us from falling into sin.

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7). One day we will have to reap what we have sown. Christians sometimes wish that this law did not apply to them. Unfortunately, it applies to all of us.

I met a man who told me that he used to steal for fun when he was young. Someone warned him about this. One day, when he came home, his television had been stolen. Soon he realized that he had left the back door of his house open. Then he remembered his own misdeeds and became frightened. What if this was the beginning of theft that would affect his own property?

He came to God and repented of his actions, asked for forgiveness, and gave his life to Jesus. His values began to change.

We often have to live with the consequences of our words, thoughts, and wrongdoings, even if we have already been forgiven for them.

"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

A 23-year-old young woman came to see me. She was a Christian and a lesbian. She came to discuss her difficulties with her parents. I asked her if she had considered her lesbian relationship from God's perspective. In her opinion, God is love, who forgives all our sins. I read her 1 Corinthians 6:9, cf. above.

The adversary deceives each of us in his own way. Sin blinds our eyes. Our conscience begins to dull, and our relationship with God cracks. True Christians are known by their fruits.

GOD'S WARFARE

We have been given two kinds of weapons: 1) weapons with which we defend ourselves, 2) weapons with which we attack the enemy.

THE BELT OF TRUTH

“Stand firm! Fastening your belt with the truth” (Eph. 6:14).

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). When Jesus lives in your heart, truth also finds a place in you. This refers to truthfulness, honesty, sincerity, and openness in your daily life toward yourself and others.

Every day we are faced with many choices. It takes practice to make constructive choices that strengthen our respect for God and our own lives. We must watch ourselves so that the Devil does not gain a foothold in some area of our lives, causing us to drift away from God. Decide every day to stand on the side of the Victor. By God's grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can become the hero of your own life.

As we put on the belt of truth, we must reject pretense, hypocrisy, and lies, speak what we mean, and do what we truly want to do as we follow God. For example, we do not joke at the expense of others or hurt others thoughtlessly.

Facing the truth within ourselves can be painful. Authenticity and honesty build our relationships. Some hide behind the mask of Christianity and believe they are safe. The truth is not our enemy. It is our liberating friend. If you want to participate in so-called recovery programs, the first step is to face yourself.

“Then we will follow the truth and love, and grow in every way into Christ, who is the head” (Eph. 4:15).

Jesus himself prayed, “Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Lies can only be overcome by divine knowledge and truth.

> “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

THE ARMOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Put on the full armor of God” (Eph. 6:14).

When we accept Christ, we receive the right to become children of God.

As proof of this, we are given Christ's righteousness.

“Since God has made us righteous, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

“It is God who makes you what you are in Christ Jesus. He has given us wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

“That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, so that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:10).

The armor of righteousness is protection against the accuser. When the Devil shoots his fiery arrows at you, saying, “You don’t measure up to God’s standards,” you can respond to the accusation with Paul’s words: “Who can bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.”

The Bible emphasizes the centrality of the heart in our lives. “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Prov. 4:23). What you hold in your heart largely determines the direction of your life. We are urged to guard our hearts against all evil. The purpose of the breastplate of righteousness is to protect the heart from the attacks of the Devil.

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8).

According to Paul, love always protects, trusts, hopes, and endures. If you put on the armor of faith with love in your heart, you will be protected from burning arrows. “In Christ Jesus, it does not matter whether a person is circumcised or not. The only thing that matters is faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6).

SHOES OF THE BOOT

“And with your feet, put on the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15).

When we accept Christ, we are united with the King of Peace. “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to become children of God, to all who believed in his name” (John 1:12).

The peace of Christ is promised in our hearts when we make room for God's word within ourselves. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:15-16).

Shoes protect our feet from wounds and bruises. They support us as we spread the good news to others. In order to proclaim the gospel of peace, we must first examine ourselves and impress God’s word upon our hearts. The quality of life of those who have received the gospel begins to improve little by little. Peace, joy, and freedom of mind are more valuable than anything else. We cannot convince others of what we ourselves are not sure of. The footwear provided by God protects us from the enemy's attacks and can prevent us from stumbling into traps set for us.

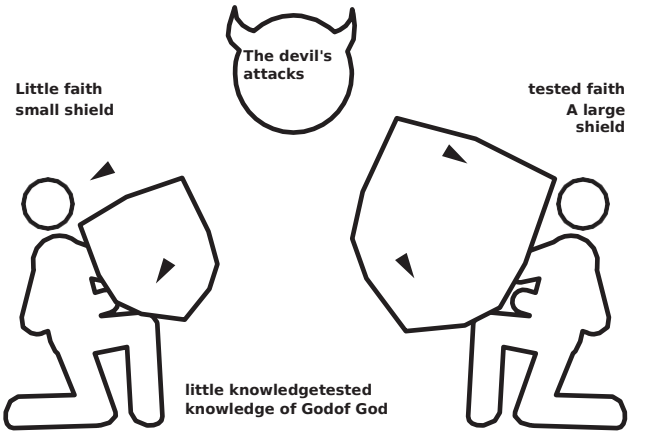
“Let us therefore strive for peace and to build one another up” (Rom. 14:19). Jesus, the Prince of Peace, encourages us to be at peace with ourselves, with God, and with others. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (Rom. 16:20).

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

“Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16).

When we resist the devil, he becomes angry and launches counterattacks. These attacks may target our minds, hearts, bodies, or finances.

To repel his attacks, we need a shield. If he cannot hurt us, he may attack our family or loved ones. Often, our spouse may be the target of the Devil's attacks. Our shield should be strong enough to protect our loved ones. Often the Devil's fiery darts are lies, accusations, and temptations that distress us. Whenever deceitful thoughts, accusations, or temptations try to enter our minds, let us resist them with the word of God. Jesus gave us an example of this.


The devil's attacks
Little faith small shield
tested faith A large shield
little knowledgetested knowledge of Godof God

“Keep me safe from those who would lead me astray, so that I may be innocent and pure, free from sin” (Ps. 19:14).

In the battle against evil spirits, we need victorious faith. “So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God’s power” (1 Cor. 2:5).

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

“Take the helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17).

The purpose of the helmet of salvation is to protect our minds, where spiritual battles are won or lost.

Our salvation is built on Christ’s work of atonement, not on our own merits. We are children of God, and nothing can change that unless we ourselves want it to. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Rom. 8:35).

When difficulties arise, we easily doubt the truth of God's promises. Then we can decide whether we will obey God despite them. We can surrender our doubts to him.

“You were dead because of your transgressions and your uncircumcision, but God made you alive together with Christ. He forgave us all our transgressions, canceled the debt that stood against us with all its regulations, and nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:13-14).

One of the devil's typical lies is to fill our minds with doubts about our salvation. He wants us to remember our sins and dwell on them. "Satan has been a murderer from the beginning. He is far from the truth; it is foreign to him. When he lies, he is speaking his own language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

We can command the Devil to leave in the name of Jesus and because of the blood shed for us. Once we have given our lives to Christ, the enemy no longer has any claim on us. We must receive the assurance of the Bible in faith. “In him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and in union with him you have also become partakers of this fullness. He is the head of all powers and authorities. You have been united with him through circumcision, which was not done by human hands, the circumcision of Christ, in which your sinful nature is stripped away” (Col. 2:9-11).

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8).

FAITH AND HOPE

Faith and hope belong together, as Paul writes in Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is the foundation on which hope is built. The stronger our faith, the stronger our hope. If our faith is weak, our hope will not be strong either. Our hope is based on God's promises. It gives us a positive outlook for both temporal and eternal life.

"Peace of mind is the foundation of health. Passions consume like a creeping disease" (Proverbs 14:30).

"A joyful heart keeps a person healthy, but a gloomy mind wastes the body" (Proverbs 17:22).

Our basic attitude affects our whole life. When we trust in God's guidance, we can have peace of mind. When difficulties arise, we do not remain under them, but we can thank God because He has a solution to our problem.

Have you examined your attitude toward life today?

“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36). Our hope, based on God’s promises, lasts from this day until eternity, when we will be with the Lord forever.

Faith and patience sustain our hope. “I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look, God’s dwelling place is with the people. He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them’” (Rev. 21:1-3).

When we accept the salvation prepared by God, we also receive hope. “We have been saved, that is our sure hope. But hope that is already fulfilled is no longer hope. Who hopes for what he already sees?” (Rom. 8:24).

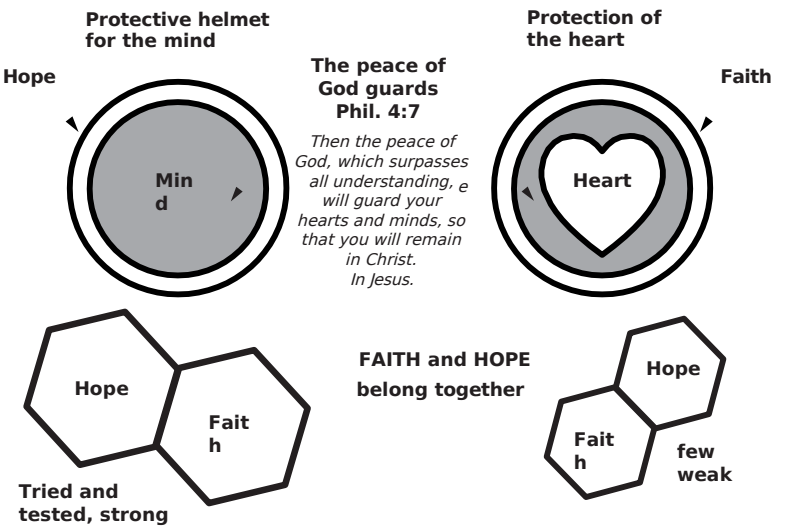
Paul clarifies our hope in his letter to the Colossians 1:27: “He wanted to make known to them how glorious this mystery is, which is to be revealed to all nations: Christ in you, the hope of glory.” “To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: Christ in you, the hope of glory” (NKJV).

“That is why God also swore an oath to guarantee his promise. He wanted to show those to whom the promise applies in this special way that his decision will not change. With those two unshakeable words, in which he, God,

cannot lie, he wanted to encourage us who have taken refuge in him and urge us to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. That hope is the anchor of our life, firm and secure. It extends beyond the veil. There Jesus, our forerunner, entered when he became high priest, whose priesthood is eternal, the priesthood of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:17-20).

"Let us hold fast to our confession and hope, for he who has made the promise is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

Paul's exhortation in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."


Protective helmet for the mind
Hope
Min d
The peace of God guards Phil. 4:7
Then the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, e will guard your hearts and minds, so that you will remain in Christ. In Jesus.
Protection of the heart
Faith
Heart
Hope
Fait h
Tried and tested, strong
FAITH and HOPE belong together
Hope
Fait h
few weak

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT - THE WORD OF GOD

"Take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

The Word of God is compared to a sword in the Bible. It is our only weapon of attack in God's armor. Without it, we cannot drive away the enemy of our souls. The other pieces of armor are meant to protect us from his attacks.

We must accept the authority of the Bible in our lives. "Every word of God is tested by fire; he is the shield of those who take refuge in him.

Add nothing to his words—he will call you to account, and your deceit will be exposed" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

> "There is truth in God's Word. It speaks directly to us and offers solutions to life's difficult experiences. The Word brings peace to a troubled conscience, comfort to the sorrowful, hope to the hopeless, courage to the despairing, and assurance to those who have lost loved ones. The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of God's good word (Heb. 6:5), and the Letter to the Colossians says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). The devil knows the power of God's word. It exposes his lies and deceit and resists his power. Jesus also used God's word victoriously.
> - E.G. White, Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, p. 53.

The word of God:

— is our spiritual food. Studying it is a prerequisite for a healthy spiritual life. "But Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."' (Matt. 4:4).

— reveals our innermost intentions and thoughts. "Therefore, do not judge prematurely, before the Lord comes. He will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the heart, and then each one will receive praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

— cleanses and renews our minds. "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we live in fellowship with him but walk in darkness, we lie and do not follow the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).

— Strengthens our faith. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

— Strengthens our character. “God, who is rich in mercy, has called you through his glory in Christ Jesus. After you have suffered a little while, he himself will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).

— gives hope for life. “Everything that is written in the Scriptures is written for our instruction, so that we may have endurance, comfort, and hope” (Rom. 15:4).

— He heals wounded hearts. “I will heal your wounds, I will restore you to health, says the Lord; I will heal you, Zion, you who are called ‘the forsaken wife,’ you whom no one cares for” (Jer. 30:17). “He sent his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave” (Ps. 107:20).

— reveals the devil's plans and lies and frees you from them. "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

— is the key to answered prayers and a victorious life. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). “Keep these words of mine in your heart. Study the law day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. Then you will be successful and prosper in all your undertakings” (Joshua 1:8).

— give strength to overcome temptations. “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13). “Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been tested, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

— guarantees us eternal life. "Praise be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy, he has given us new life and living hope by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. From him we receive an inheritance that cannot be corrupted, defiled, or fade away. It is reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3,4). “I now commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which has the power to build you up

and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Here is an experience of how studying the Bible changed a life.

I was treating a woman who had lived a completely godless and worldly life. Suddenly, she "burned out." Her body couldn't keep up with the pace she was living at. God stopped her.

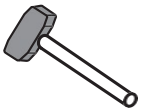
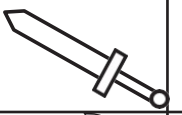
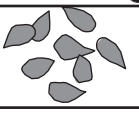
From her sickbed, she began to seek God in her life. She bought a Bible and read it every day. The power she received from studying the Bible and the truth began to gradually change and heal her.

She came to me because her mind was accusing her. She did not understand why and how the accusations could end. I told her that an evil spirit was accusing her. We prayed for clarity about where these accusations were coming from. After prayer, she realized something about her mother that she had not been aware of before. Now she chose to forgive her mother. After that, I asked God to heal the wounds in her heart and mind. Then I commanded the evil spirit to leave her in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood.

I told him about the battles of the mind and how we become victorious through Jesus' atoning work. I taught him how to fight against evil and how to resist all thoughts put into his mind by the evil spirit in the name of Jesus and through the power of His blood.

He has grown in faith and truth. His mind has been healed, and he is happy to help others find their way to Jesus. He has learned to fight against the lies that evil spirits plant in our minds.

God uses parables to illuminate the meaning of His word. God's word is like:

	The bread of life (John 6:33, 35, 48; Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16) feeds the spiritually hungry and provides nourishment for spiritual growth.
	A lamp or **light** (Ps. 119:105, 130; 2 Pet. 1:19) dispels the clouds of darkness and doubt and helps us escape danger and see the clear path ahead of us.
	A mirror (James 1:23, 24; 2 Cor. 3:18) helps us to see ourselves as we really are, so that we can change and grow into a perfect reflection of Jesus.
	The water of life (John 6:35; Matt. 5:6; Eph. 5:26; John 15:3). God's word has a cleansing and transforming power in our lives. It also satisfies our thirst for eternal life.
	Fire (Jer. 20:9; Jer. 23:29; Ps. 39:4). God's word is like fire that melts away the sinful areas of our lives if we just let it do so.
	**A hammer** (Jer. 23:29) that breaks hardened hearts in a way that no human means can.
	**The sword** (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). It can pierce our conscience, wound our pride, and kill our rebellious spirit.
	**The seed** (Luke 8:11). It produces fruit in the life where it gives it space.

Daily reading of God's Word gives us positive things to think about. Prayer keeps our connection with God alive. Ask for the protection of Christ's blood for yourself and your family every day.

THE POSITION OF THE DEFENDER

"The word of God is living and powerful. It is sharper than any double-edged sword, it strikes deep and cuts through the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, it reveals our innermost intentions and thoughts" (Hebrews 4:12).

Jesus used the sword of the word when He was doing His Father's will on earth. Especially when He was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, He overcame the temptations with the sword of the word.

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was finally hungry. Then the tempter came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. ’ But Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple. He said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you. They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered, 'It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, and said, "All this I will give you if you will kneel before me and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only. ’ Then the Devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him” (Matt. 4:1-11).

The enemy tested Jesus with doubts and cunningly used Bible texts. The same tactic continues with us.

“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

— What kind of relationship with God do you have today?

— What is your relationship with the Bible?

— What is your relationship with other people like?

— How do you see yourself; do you accept yourself, or do you find it difficult to live with yourself?

UNPROTECTED AREA

Despite our battle gear, our backs are unprotected. Why? Obviously, it is so that we do not give the Devil any victories in the battle of our lives by turning our backs on him. As Christians, we cannot fight the Devil's forces alone. We belong to the body of Christ, and as members of that body, we should find our place. Each member has their own place. We must also learn to trust our fellow combatants. After all, we have a common enemy! We can protect each other in many battles. Wounding each other is not part of the nature of battle.

THE POSITION OF THE ATTACKER

In spiritual warfare, in addition to defense, there are also situations of attack.

> *I myself have been attacked by the Devil at night after helping someone give their life to Christ during the day.*
>
> *Evil spirits don't like it when people under his authority are helped. I woke up in the night with an incomprehensible fear, after which I felt enormous pressure on my chest. It was as if something was stuck in my throat. I couldn't speak. At that point, my husband woke up and understood what was going on. He commanded the evil spirits to leave in the name of Jesus and by His blood. The feelings of evil disappeared!*

What if we are unable to speak during an attack?

In the name of the Lord, let us be ready to resist the forces of evil. You can just whisper, “Jesus, help me!” The holy angels are ready to help. Then the forces of evil must retreat. If our Bible is just sitting on the bookshelf, it won’t help us. When we read it, put our faith and hope in its words, it becomes the

sword of the Spirit in our lives.

Defense in war is not enough. We must also know how to attack. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

God’s church has conquered enemy territory on earth. The church does not seek only to resist the Devil, but to continually gain ground in the world. When Christ is Lord of our lives, we can expand the boundaries of His kingdom against the will of the enemy.

“But if I drive out evil spirits with the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has already come to you. “When a strong man guards his castle with a weapon in his hand, his possessions are safe. But if someone stronger attacks him and overpowers him, that stronger man takes away the weapons and equipment he relied on and divides up the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Luke 11:20-23).

“He (God) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15).

The devil has been stripped of his weapons. Our task here on earth is to represent Christ’s victory over all evil.

Our task is to

— represent Christ in this age. Power is only realized in practice. If we do not exercise the power entrusted to us, which is based on Christ's merits, it remains ineffective.

— shows that his victory still works today. There are many Christians who only care about their own well-being. They find it strange to think about applying the power of victory offered by God outside their own circle of life.

PREACHING

“I charge you in the name of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not

tolerate sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires

to hear what they want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths” (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

The task of Christians in the world is to proclaim the word of God. Our lives should reflect the reality of God. This arouses interest in God among those who are separated from Him. Many people do not open the Bible, but they read about the lives of Christians and draw their own conclusions based on that. Who do we represent in the world? Regardless, everyone is ultimately responsible for their own choices. People's minds are filled with many different things and aspirations. Whatever the reception of the gospel may be, we are called to continue preaching.

, we are called to continue preaching.

The word of God has the power to change people. When it is sent forth, it does not return empty, but accomplishes its work. "For as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bud and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

God's word breaks down the rocks of pride and selfishness in people's hearts; it burns away the dross of life so that what is most valuable may come to its own. The word is like a fire that burns away the filth of sin from our lives. It penetrates the deepest recesses of our hearts with its sharpness. “Is not my word like fire, like a hammer that breaks a rock?” (Jer. 23:29). “And the secrets of his heart (as one outside the church) would be revealed. Then he would fall on his face, pray to God, and confess, “God is truly among you” (1 Cor. 14:25).

Its purpose is to raise us as God’s children for heaven.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY ABOUT GOD

We must distinguish between preaching and personal witnessing. Preaching presents the truth of God's Word directly. The purpose of personal witnessing is to share about our life with God.

To be effective witnesses, we need supernatural power to

help us, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He left His Spirit on earth as His representative. Without it, our work in God's vineyard will not succeed.

"I pray that he may strengthen you with his indescribable glory through his Spirit in your inner being. In this way, Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith, and love will be the foundation and growth of your life" (Eph. 3:16-17).

When we give our lives into God's hands, he equips us with his power. That power enables us to resist temptation, serve and love God and other people. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom and patience. It strengthens us to fulfill our mission here. Do we trust the Holy Spirit to work through us?

"They (those faithful to God) defeated him (the accuser), and the blood of the Lamb and their testimony brought them victory" (Rev. 12:11).

The devil does not want anyone to be strengthened in their faith in God's love and mercy. Based on this verse from Revelation, there are two elements to personal witness: the experience of faith based on God's word and the blood of Jesus.

The testimony of Christians is strengthened by five things promised in God's Word. They become ours through Christ's blood of atonement.

1. We are redeemed.

2. Our sins have been forgiven.

3. In the blood of Jesus, we have atonement: "God presented him (Christ) as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. This is how God has demonstrated his righteousness. In his forbearance, he left the sins of the past unpunished" (Rom. 3:25).

4. He makes us righteous: "Since he (Christ) has now made us righteous by shedding his blood, he will much more surely save us from the wrath to come" (Rom. 5:9).

5. We are sanctified: “Therefore Jesus also suffered and died outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Hebrews 13:12). May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:23).

All these promises belong to those who have received Christ as their Savior.

We can say the same thing in other words:

— Through the blood of Christ, we are saved from the power of the devil.

— Thanks to it, our sins are forgiven.

— The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

— Through His blood, we have the right to be children of God; we are justified.

— By the power of His blood, we are sanctified and belong to God. We are no longer the property of the enemy of our souls!

PRAYER

“Do all this in the spirit of prayer and supplication. Pray at all times in the Spirit. Be alert and persistent in your prayers for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18).

Prayer is a powerful weapon in the work God has given us. Prayer paves the way to people’s hearts. Its importance is crucial when we want to win people from the devil for God’s kingdom. The time, topics, and place of our prayer life are in our own hands. We can pray anytime, anywhere.

The Acts of the Apostles gives a good example of prayer: “About that time King Herod began to persecute some members of the church. He had James, the brother of John, put to death, and when he saw that this pleased the Jews, he had Peter arrested. This was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Herod put Peter in prison

assigned four squads of soldiers to guard him. He intended to bring Peter before the people after Passover. So Peter was kept in prison, but the church prayed fervently to God for him. On the night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was bound with two chains, and guards were posted at the prison door (Acts 12:1-6).

Saving Peter from this situation seemed humanly impossible. The church prayed, and God answered by sending an angel to free Peter from prison. “I tell you, whatever two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” Jesus said in his Great Commission, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 18:19).

But suddenly the angel of the Lord stood before him, and the room was filled with light, and the angel shook Peter awake, saying, "Get up quickly." The chains fell from Peter's hands. The angel said, 'Put on your clothes and shoes.' Peter did so, and the angel said, 'Throw your cloak over your shoulders and follow me.' Peter followed the angel. However, he did not understand that what was happening was real, but thought it was a vision. They passed the first gate, then the second, and came to the iron gate that led to the city. It opened by itself, and they stepped out and walked along the street. Suddenly, the angel was gone. Then Peter realized what had happened and said, “Truly, now I know what happened! The Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and saved me from everything this people wanted to do to me” (Acts 12:7-11).

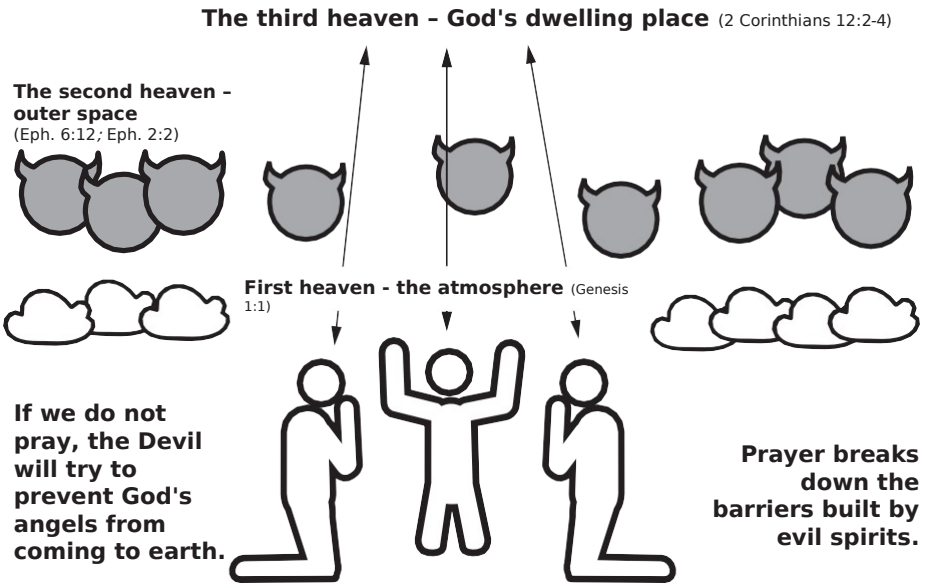
According to the Bible, angels are ministering spirits sent to help us. “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them” (Ps. 34:7). It is wise to humbly ask for God’s help.

On my long journeys, I have experienced that an angel in human form has come to help me. It is safe to trust in God’s promises, including the help of angels. “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Ps. 91:11).

"I know someone who belongs to Christ, who was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether he was in

his body or out of it, I do not know,

only God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise and heard words that no man can utter. Whether he was in the body or out of the body, I do not know, only God knows" (2 Cor. 12:2-4).


The third heaven – God's dwelling place (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)
The second heaven – outer space
(Eph. 6:12; Eph. 2:2)
First heaven - the atmosphere (Genesis 1:1)
If we do not pray, the Devil will try to prevent God's angels from coming to earth.
Prayer breaks down the barriers built by evil spirits.

If God is rejected and something else is chosen instead, evil spirits begin to control both people and areas, cf. the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Prayer helps open the way for angels to come to us when we need help.

Daniel's book gives an example of this. "I heard his (the angel's) words aloud, and then I fell into a deep sleep, face down on the ground. But a hand touched me and shook me, and I rose to my knees and leaned on my hands. He said to me, 'Daniel, you who are beloved by God! Learn to understand the words I speak to you. Stand up. I have been sent to you.' And when he spoke these words to me, I stood up, trembling. He said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Your words were heard from the first day you humbly asked for understanding from God. I have come because of your words. The prince of Persia has opposed me for twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. That is why I have been staying there with the kings of Persia" (Dan. 10:9-13).

Daniel had been grieving for three weeks because his prayers had not been answered. Daniel did not know that the spiritual powers on the side of the Persian king were delaying the answer to his prayer. Only when Michael (referring to Jesus) came to the angel's aid was he able to bring his message to Daniel.

There can be many reasons for delays in prayer answers. One of them is the hindrance of evil spirits, which can turn into a delaying battle.

God listens carefully to every humble prayer and answers them in His own way: yes, no, or wait! If our answers to prayer were always positive from our point of view, it could ruin our lives and be dangerous to our well-being. If, on the other hand, we received a negative answer to all our requests, thoughts of revenge would begin to grow in our hearts and our spirits would wither. A constant "wait" answer would cause disappointment. God knows what is best for us. Even if we do not receive the answer we hope for, we can still grow in our spiritual trust in God.

We can also pray silently. God knows and understands our thoughts from afar. We cannot hide anything from Him. Evil spirits cannot see our thoughts like God can. They try to feed their own thoughts to our minds if we lose focus. We can command them to leave aloud. They have good ears.

God wants us to test him. “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way, says the Lord of hosts. Then you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you a blessing in abundance" (Mal. 3:10). We can present to him the things that weigh on our hearts and ask him for specific answers.

“I love the Lord, for he hears my voice and is attentive to my pleas for mercy. When I call to him, he listens to me” (Ps. 116:1–2).

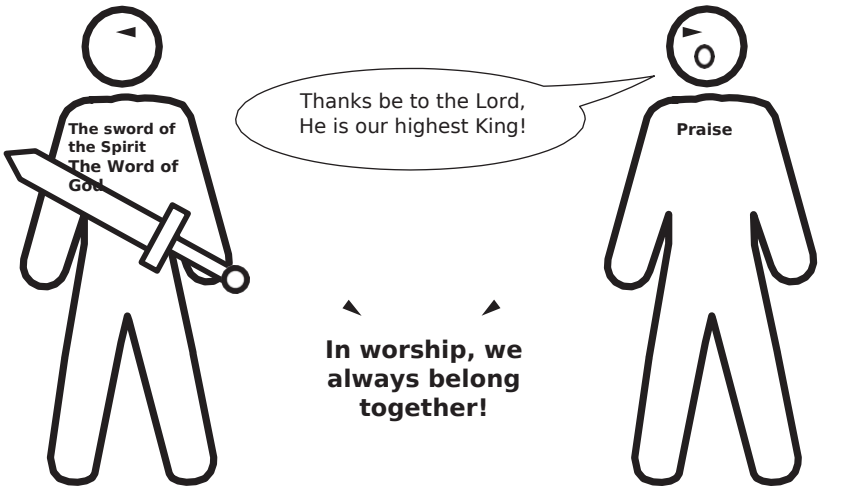
Let us consider how we can become more aware of God’s answers to our prayers.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE AS A WEAPON

Strong weapons against the enemy of our souls are thanksgiving and praise to God. Thanksgiving and praise are part of a Christian's daily prayer life. This attitude unites our spirit with the Spirit of God and strengthens our faith. Praise and thanksgiving

show respect for God and His greatness. Gratitude moves God's hand in our favor.

The word of God and His praise always go hand in hand.


The sword of the Spirit
The Word of God
Thanks be to the Lord, He is our highest King!
Praise
In worship, we always belong together!

Early the next morning, they set out for the wilderness of Tekoa. As they were leaving, Jehoshaphat stepped forward and said, "Listen to me, people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Trust in the Lord your God, and you will not be defeated. Trust in the words of his prophets, and you will be successful." After consulting with the people, he placed singers in front of the armed forces, who, dressed in holy garments, sang praises to the Lord: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his mercy endures forever!" At that moment, as the singers began to praise the Lord with shouts of joy, the Lord sent a band of Ammonites, Moabites, and men from the hill country of Seir who were lying in ambush among the Ammonites and Moabites who were attacking Judah. All of them were struck down, for the Ammonites and Moabites, in their panic, attacked the men of Mount Seir and killed them. After destroying the men of Seir, they began to destroy each other. When the army of Judah came to the place where they could see the wilderness and were about to attack the enemy, there were only dead bodies there. Not a single one had survived” (2 Chronicles 20:20-24).

God fought for His grateful and praising people. The enemy forces destroyed each other in their confusion.

I treated a woman who had deep occult problems. She seemed to be free, but at night evil spirits disturbed her. She commanded them to leave, and they left, returning two or three times a night. She came up with the idea of playing quiet spiritual music or a CD with Bible readings throughout the night. The nighttime disturbances stopped!

The purpose of thanksgiving and praise is to drive away evil spirits. Most of the time, they do leave in these situations. The devil cannot tolerate the praise of God. You may ask, "Why didn't God shut the enemy's mouth?" He has given us weapons against evil so that we may use them. As we resist the forces of evil, we learn something about the victorious power of Christ.

"Lord, our God, how great is your name in the earth! Your glory is above the heavens" (Ps. 8:2).

“Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous and upright, and praise him! Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre, play the harp with ten strings. Make a new song for him, play beautifully, shout your joy aloud” (Ps. 33:1-3).

“Shout for joy to God, O earth; sing for joy, O inhabitants of the world. Sing to him, sing praise to his name; give thanks to him and praise him. Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds! Your enemies crumble before you because of your mighty power’ (Ps. 66:1-3).

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, praise his name” (Ps. 100:4).

“They have the praise of God on their lips, and a two-edged sword in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations, to punish the peoples. They bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters. They carry out the judgment that the Lord has decreed. This is the honorable task of the Lord's servants. Hallelujah!" (Ps. 149:6-9).

In addition to the above-mentioned armor, we need:

1. COURAGE

The Holy Spirit gives us strength and courage.

In the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, he is exhorted four times to be ‘strong and courageous’.

“Be strong and courageous. You shall divide that land among the Israelites; I have sworn to give it to them as their possession. Be strong and courageous. Be careful to obey all the law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. Then you will succeed in everything you do” (Joshua 1:6-7). “Remember what I have told you: ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged. The Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (verse 9). “Anyone who disobeys your commands and does not obey everything you command shall be put to death. Be strong and courageous” (verse 18).

“The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1).

“Stand firm, and you will overcome the world” (Luke 21:19).

“When they had finished praying, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (Acts 4:31).

Today, if ever, we need people filled with the Holy Spirit who will boldly spread the good news of the gospel. “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).

2. HUMILITY

Clothing ourselves with humility is the key to a close relationship with God. “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:10).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 15:33). “The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord is to obtain wisdom” (Proverbs 22:4).

Humility and gentleness are closely related. The humble submit themselves to God's will. Humility is the opposite of pride. In Jesus' life, the power of the Holy Spirit, humility, and love were always evident. As we approach people as representatives of Christ's followers, we must be humble and courageous, trusting in Jesus.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit. Without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Only by trusting in Christ can we humbly face even hostile crowds.

If pride dwells in your heart, God wants to free

you from it. Suggested prayer:

> *“Father, in your word you say that ‘pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall’ (Proverbs 16:18). I confess to you today that I am proud, that I have thought only of myself without caring for the needs of others. I have not wanted to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow you. I have believed the lies of the devil and given him room in my heart and in my life. I confess that my own will has been more important than your will, God. I deeply regret my pride and selfishness and ask for your forgiveness. I pray that you will show me if there are still areas in my life and heart where pride reigns. I choose to surrender them to you. I ask you to restore to me those areas of my life that the devil has taken over. Free me*

from his lies and chains. Today, I choose with all my heart to obey you.

The guidance of the Holy Spirit in my life. I want to get rid of selfishness and vanity. Give me humility and the ability to respect others. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). I ask all this in Jesus' name, amen.

3. TRUST

"I praise your word, God; I trust in you and am not afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" (Ps. 56:5,12). "You are my refuge, a strong fortress against my enemies" (Ps. 61:4).

"My salvation and my honor come from God. He is my strong rock, in him is my refuge. Trust in God at all times; bring all your troubles before him. God is our refuge" (Ps. 62:8-9).

"It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in human help. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in the help of the mighty" (Ps. 118:8-9).

We have no other authority in God's work than what we have received from Him. It is our honor to do the will of our Sender. He calls us to serve His kingdom by loving, caring, preaching, teaching, praying, counseling, etc. If we experience evil spirits opposing and hindering our work, we must command them to leave in the name of Jesus' death on the cross. On the cross, Jesus defeated all His enemies. His atoning death is our strength and our hope.

4. SELF-CONTROL

not control over others

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love" (2 Peter 1:5-7).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22).

Self-discipline and self-control are the keys to inner freedom. If we long for it, we should strive to recognize and identify all areas of our lives that are bound. Avoid returning to your old patterns and habits that have been revealed to be contrary to God's will. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a guide and strengthener according to our needs. A life without limits returns us to bondage. Without obedience to God, we cannot maintain our freedom.

"A man without self-control is like a city without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). Self-control protects our hearts from the devil.

"Be silent, be calm, and do not be angry—it only leads to evil" (Ps. 37:8).

To keep your freedom, you need self-discipline and self-control in these areas of life:

— **Thoughts.** "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8).

— **Appetite.** "Even if you cut your throat with a knife, do not give in to your hunger" (Prov. 23:2). "Do not start serving idols like some of them do. The Scriptures say, "They sat down to eat and drink, and then they got up to dance" (1 Cor. 10:7). Controlling your appetite strengthens your ability to control other needs.

— **Speech.** "Many speak before they think—even fools have more hope" (Proverbs 29:20). "Your speech will be your food, and your words will be your sustenance. Life and death are in the power of the tongue—as you choose your words, so you will reap the fruit" (Proverbs 18:20-21). If we listen critically to our own speech, we may realize that we need to purify our hearts, because words come from there.

— **Sexual behavior.** "I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). "Let us not indulge in sexual

immorality as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died" (1 Cor. 10:8). Keeping our sexuality under control is one area of life that requires self-restraint.

— **Emotional life.** "A joyful heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit; a cheerful heart makes life a celebration" (Proverbs 15:13, 15). A positive attitude brightens even a cloudy day.

— **Character.** "It is better to stop talking than to start; patience is better than pride" (Ecclesiastes 7:8). "The wicked are trapped by their own sins, ensnared by the net of their own deeds" (Proverbs 5:22). Our character is the only thing we can take with us into eternal life. Today we have the opportunity to let God help us change our minds and purify our character.

God wants us to exercise self-control in all areas of our lives.

5. PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE

"We rejoice even in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

"Everything in the Scriptures was written as a lesson for us, so that through endurance, encouragement, and hope we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

"In everything we show ourselves to be servants of God. We endure hardships, troubles, and afflictions" (2 Corinthians 6:4).

"May the power and strength of his glory strengthen you to be always patient and enduring" (Col. 1:11).

"But you, man of God, flee from all this! Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:11). "You have faithfully followed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance" (2 Tim. 3:10).

Patience and endurance are important virtues in God's work. When we pray for them, He will hear us.

To win spiritual battles, we must use the weapons God has given us. We need Jesus' personal help and also protection for ourselves. We are conquerors as we attack the enemy's territory. The goal is to win as many people as possible to the gospel.

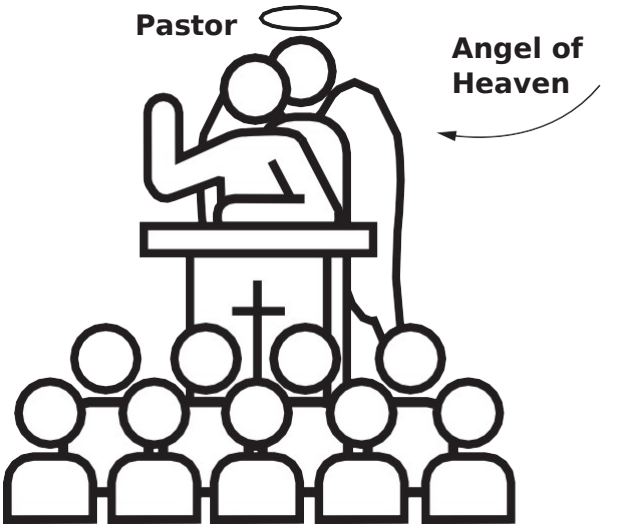
“To the one who conquers, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:20-21).

Psalm 18:38-41 refers to this spiritual battle. “I pursue my enemies and overtake them; I do not turn back until they are destroyed. I strike them down, and they rise no more. They fall beneath my feet. You give me strength for battle; you put my enemies beneath my feet. You drive my enemies before me, and I destroy them.”

3 TRUE OR FALSE PROPHETS AND TEAC

Every true prophet of God was also a teacher in the Old Testament. “(Elijah) Answer me, Lord, answer me, so that this people may learn
that you, Lord, are God! Answer and turn their hearts back to you!" (1 Kings 18:37).

How can we distinguish between a true and a false prophet? The task of a true prophet is to bring people back to God. He calls people to choose the path that leads to truth, faithfulness, and righteousness. On this path, we receive the blessings of God's love. There are enough blessings to share with those around us. For some of your loved ones, you can be a guide and support in their lives.



“But I am filled with power and the Spirit of the Lord, and I boldly demand justice. I will reveal to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel his sins.” Hear, O heads of the house of Jacob, O rulers of Israel! You twist what is right and mock justice; you build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with injustice. The leaders of this city judge for bribes, its priests teach for pay, its prophets prophesy for money. Yet they trust in the Lord and say, “The Lord is among us. No disaster can befall us.” For your sake, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the temple mount will be overgrown with thickets” (Micah 3:8-12).

False prophets deceive people cunningly and lead them away from God. Jeremiah gives us valuable advice. “This is what the Lord Almighty says: Do not listen to these prophets, nor pay attention to the words they speak. They are deceiving you! They speak their own ideas, not my words" (Jer. 23:16). "I have not sent these prophets, yet they run here and there. I have not spoken to them, yet they claim to be my prophets. If they had been present and heard what I decided to do, they would have proclaimed my decision to my people and turned them from their evil ways and evil deeds" (verses 21-22). “I have heard what those prophets say, those who proclaim lies in my name. They say, ‘I have had a dream, I have had a dream!’ How long will this continue? What is in the minds of those prophets who proclaim lies and their own deceitful imaginings! They seek to make my people forget me because of the dreams they tell each other. Just as their fathers forgot me and served Baal. Let the prophet who has seen a dream tell his dream. But let the one to whom I have spoken proclaim my words faithfully! What are the ewes doing among the grain? says the Lord” (verses 25-28).

Jeremiah continues: "The Lord says: 'I will surely attack these prophets

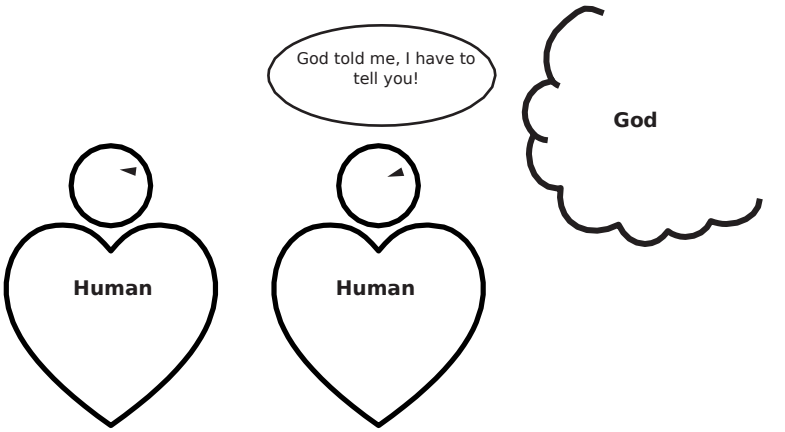
who steal words from one another and proclaim them as my words! I will attack these prophets who claim, 'This is the word of the Lord.' I will attack those who proclaim their lies and tell them. They lie and boast, and thus mislead my people. I have not sent them or appointed them. They are of no use to this people, says the Lord" (Jer. 23:30-32).

We can also be led astray into the role of false prophets. Some people want to manipulate others for their own benefit by claiming to speak messages from God. If your words spring from selfishness or a need for glory, they offend the Lord.

A young woman came to me, upset by something an older man had said. This man had told her that God had instructed them to marry. The woman was horrified by the suggestion. She believed in God and did not want to go against His will. That is why she

came to me.

I asked the woman, "Has God spoken to you about this man?" "No," she replied. I told her that the man was trying to manipulate her in the name of God. He is trying to take advantage of your honesty and feelings. I suggested that the woman keep her distance from the man. God speaks to us directly, without intermediaries. We have free will to choose our life partner. The woman was relieved and left me feeling happy.



This has its own dangers. God tells me things that concern me.

*

A woman came to me and needed help with her difficulties. She had given her life to Christ, but her spouse was not pleased with her choice of husband. The man began using drugs, which led to difficulties in their marriage. The couple had no children. The wife warned her husband several times without success. She filed for divorce.

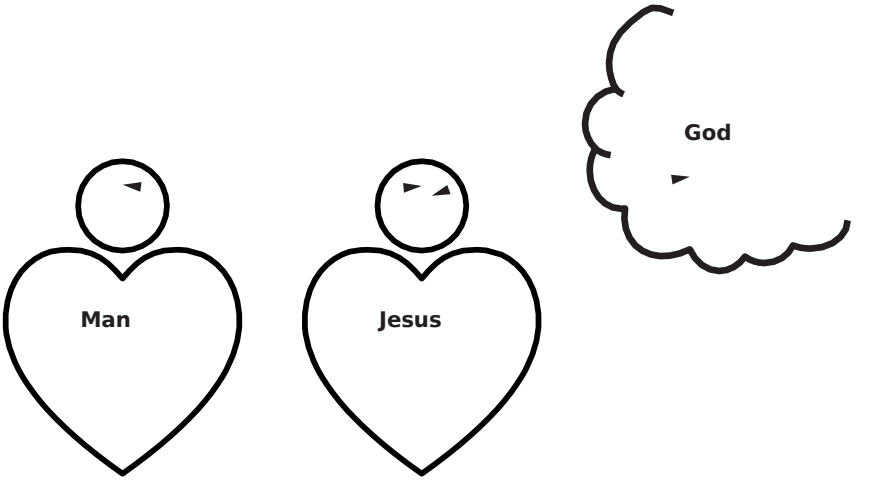
Some people in the congregation knew about the family's wealth. A couple came to

visit the woman. They said that God wanted her to give them $5,000.

. The woman, still young in her faith, lent the money to the couple and a promissory note was signed.

Years later, the woman who had given the loan planned to move to another town. She wanted her money back. The couple claimed that God had given them the money, so they had no intention of repaying the loan. Because there was a signed promissory note, after a long process, the woman got her money back.

I have encountered several similar cases. In these cases, I have asked whether God has revealed His will to both parties in advance. If God wants me to do something for someone else, He will tell me. “There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). We do not need other people between God and ourselves.



There is only one mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ.

Jesus answered, “Watch out that no one leads you astray” (Matthew 24:4). God can and wants to encourage and strengthen us through other people. Others can help us return to God when we have strayed.

“Many false prophets will arise and deceive many” (Matt. 24:11). “Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15).

In the New Testament, the apostle Peter writes an entire chapter about false prophets and teachers. Often these work within the churches. “But there are also false prophets among the people of Israel, and likewise false teachers will appear among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Peter 2:1).

False teachers also appear as servants of God. Peter continues: “Many will follow their sensual ways, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Peter 2:2). These people are only interested in worldly success, appearance, wealth, status, achievements, etc.

> *A mother I met praised and thanked her four children, but when they grew up, they rejected their mother's values. Another man boasted about his wealth. Outward things can thus become our only gospel! An elder in my congregation was talking with an acquaintance when a beautiful woman walked by. He sighed, “Wouldn’t that woman be nice to have as a one-night stand?” When evaluating a preacher, some people focus on his good looks or charisma, or in the case of a woman, her body. What do these assessments reveal about the person making them? Perhaps the preacher's message was overshadowed and the woman's contribution to the congregation was overshadowed by her appearance.*

“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil

thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matt. 15:18-19).

"A good person brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:45).

The words of false teachers often arise from sensuality. The Bible's measure is truth, faithfulness, and righteousness. Peter shows us how to recognize false teachers within the church.

"Especially those (ungodly) who follow the filthy desires of their bodies and despise the Lord and His power. These arrogant people, who are full of themselves, do not hesitate to slander even the powers of heaven" (2 Peter 2:10).

> *I have encountered women who have had sexual relations with the married pastor of their congregation. False teachers may also teach that God is loving and merciful. It is easy to hide immorality under such words.*

"Such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore not surprising that his servants also masquerade as servants of God. They will receive the end they deserve" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

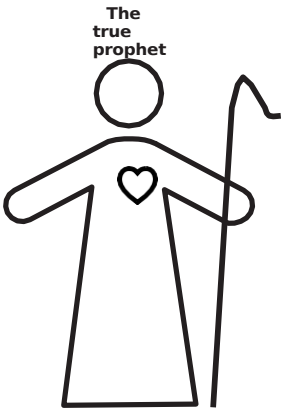
"You keep track of our sins; you examine us closely" (Ps. 90:8).

"You will know them by their fruits. You do not gather grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. A good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears bad fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 7:16-17, 19).

Signs of false teachers: they despise authority, are arrogant and stubborn. They do whatever they want. They do not ask for or need advice. They are not accountable to anyone.

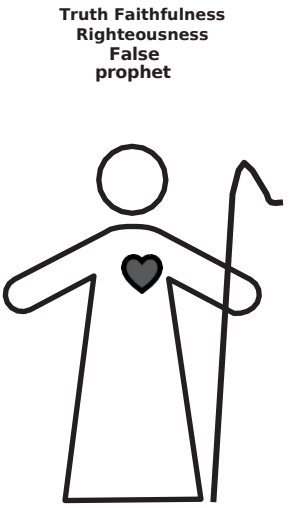
"This is what the Lord says about the prophets who lead my people astray: They promise peace when someone gives them food, but they declare holy war on anyone

who does not put anything in their mouths. Therefore, night will come upon them, and they will not see any visions; darkness will cover them, and they will not prophesy. Their sun will go down, and their day will be dark. The seers will be put to shame, and the prophets will be mocked. They will cover their faces in gloom, for God will not answer them" (Micah 3:5-7).



A TRUE PROPHET, TEACHER:

- calls back to God
- calls to repentance
- asks to follow God's commands and regulations
- asks us to follow truth, righteousness, faithfulness
- want to be a good shepherd, understand his sheep.



FALSE PROPHET, TEACHER:

- operates within the congregation
- Cunningly calls for deceitful teachings
- elevates outward behavior above truth
- lives in filthy lusts
- teaches that God accepts everything
- teaches that there is no need to live morally
- does not tolerate authority
- spirit of self-will dominates
- does not take responsibility for others.

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

I met a teacher. His wife came to ask me for advice. The man served as an elder in his church and as a scout leader. He taught Bible classes and gave sermons. His wife was certain that he was seeing other women, even though he denied it. We decided to pray with his wife for his situation. God has promised to bring even hidden sins to light.

The wife came to see me a few weeks later. She said she had heard from the parents of a young girl who had attended a scout camp that the scout leader had been getting close to the girls during the camp. Now it was time to act. We reported the matter to the authorities. The man could no longer continue working as a youth leader. This was too much for his honor. He divorced his wife and moved away from the area. He had another woman waiting for him there. Before long, this woman also left him.

The man left both God and the church in shame. He has returned to his own ways in this world. What confusion he left behind in the lives of his loved ones and the churches. This is the enemy's way of weakening the church and breaking up families.

* * *

We attended a certain church for a while. The pastor of the congregation seemed strange. His sermons were reasonable, but they left hungry hearts unsatisfied. When he spoke, he paced back and forth and used a strong, angry voice! He served in this congregation for only a short time. During that time, eight married couples divorced and 20 children

were left without the security of a home. The congregation had about 200 members.

A pastor can do a lot of damage to a congregation. “I know that after I leave, cruel wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock. Men will arise from among your own people and proclaim false teachings to draw disciples away after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

The evil spirit enjoys gaining power over those who are not rooted in Christ.

“Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. Be rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, just as you were taught. And let your gratitude be made known to everyone” (Col. 2:6-7).

“The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12).

I attended a church event with my family. My children were teenagers at the time. Two young men dressed in black came in through the door.

In my spirit, I felt that these men had an evil spirit. They behaved kindly and wanted to get to know the young people of the Seu congregation. They asked the pastor for Bible lessons. The pastor agreed to their request. After getting to know the congregation, the men visited a family one evening whose father was working the night shift. The wife was at home with their two children. The men had brought alcohol with them. I don't know if there were drugs mixed in with the drink, but after the night shift, the men raped the mother of the family. These two servants of Satan also caused division among the young people of the congregation before they disappeared.

Later, I heard that one of these young men had made a deal with the Devil, whereby he could have any woman he wanted as his sexual partner. He also tried to seduce our daughter. However, he did not succeed, because I constantly prayed for God's protection for my children. About three years later, our daughter was studying to become a nurse. During her internship, she met a young man at the hospital. He said he knew the two young men I had told her about. "We all wonder how they couldn't get you into bed," he said. My daughter replied, "We pray every day at home. God has defeated the Devil and is more powerful than him. He protected me!"

These few examples illustrate how evil spirits tempt and disrupt the lives of God's innocent children. The enemy of our souls wants all of humanity on his side. However, Jesus has paid the highest possible price for us. We can be saved from our cruel enemy.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on

him because he cares for you. Be alert and watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in your faith. You know that your brothers throughout the world

are going through the same sufferings. The God of all grace has called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus. After you have suffered a little while, he himself will equip, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:6-11).

4 FAMILY PROBLEMS

I have met sincere Christians who regularly attend church and seek God's will for their lives. Even though many of them do their best, their families may break up or their children may turn their backs on God and their parents. Others are characterized by living sometimes close to God and sometimes distancing themselves from Him and conforming to the ways of the world. There are also believers who struggle for years with misfortunes and illnesses. Even though they pray and believe, nothing seems to change. Difficulties in various forms continue, and there seems to be no victory in sight! Many families suffer from alcohol abuse, violence, suicide, mental illness, etc.

Where do so many difficulties originate? They can be the result of many different reasons. We often forget to examine the curses that originate from the person's own life, family, or lineage. Few understand how to get rid of them.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” English translation: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6, VK).

WHAT DOES SWEARING COMMUNICATE?

Cursing involves a desire for revenge, hoping that someone will get what they deserve. The curser uses inappropriate language. In doing so, he asks evil spirits to cause accidents, illness, misfortune, trials, and even death to others.

“He turned to look at his mockers and cursed them in the name of the Lord. Immediately two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys to death” (2 Kings 2:24).

“They devise evil in their hearts; continually they stir up strife. Their tongues are sharp as a serpent’s; the poison of vipers is under their lips” (Ps. 140:3-4). Here David speaks of people who wish evil upon others.

“Lord, do not let the desires of the wicked come true; thwart the plans of the arrogant! My enemies have done me great harm with their words—may they be turned back on themselves! May burning coals fall on their heads! May the Lord cast them into the fire, into a pit from which there is no

escape" (Ps. 140:9-11).

God curses the disobedient: "The Lord God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, you are cursed. Unlike other animals, livestock, and beasts, you will crawl on your belly and eat the dust of the earth as long as you live. And to the man he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You shall not eat from it," cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life'" (Genesis 3:14, 17).

“I will bless those who bless you (Abram), and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3).

“I now give you the choice between blessing and curse. You will receive the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God, which I am now giving you, but you will be cursed if you do not obey his commands and turn away from the path I am commanding you to follow, and if you give yourselves over to serving foreign gods that you have not known before” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

God gives us freedom of choice, but tells us in advance the consequences of our choices

!

The loss
Heavenly home
es in life
Blessings in life
I am in control of my own life. I do what I want.
I am obedient to God's word. I obey it.

God gives us the freedom to choose.

We can choose whom or what we want to serve!

BLESSINGS

God has given us specific guidelines for success in life. Obedience to God brings happiness and blessings into our lives.

5. Deuteronomy 28:1-14:

— The Lord will set you high above all nations. These blessings will be yours if you obey the Lord your God.

— The Lord will bless you wherever you go.

— Blessed will be your children, the crops of your land, and the calves and lambs of your herds.

— Blessed are your grain baskets and dough trays.

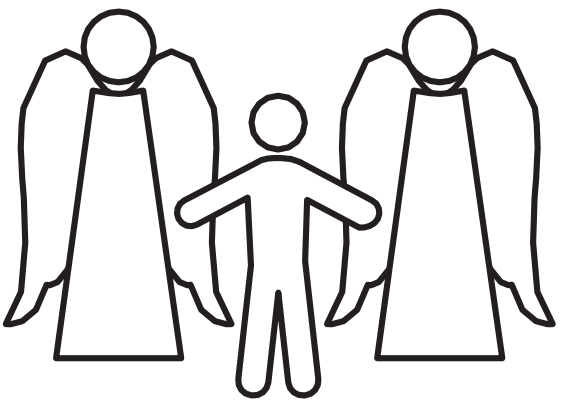
— Blessed are you when you return home. Blessed are you when you set out on your journey.

— The Lord will grant you victory over your enemies who rise up against you.

— The Lord will bless you, bless your barns, and grant you success in all your undertakings.

"You protect me from behind and in front; you spread your hand over me" (Ps. 139:5). "He will spread his wings over you, and you will be safe under them. His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart" (Ps. 91:4).

I follow Jesus Christ and obey His commands and instructions.
He watches over me, and I am safe.



"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Ps. 34:7).

How important it is to remember our responsibility before God every day. Disregard for God’s will brings curses and various illnesses into our lives.

CURSES

5. Gen. 27:15-26:

— Cursed is anyone who carves or casts an idol or image of a god and worships it in secret.

— Cursed is anyone who does not honor their father and mother.

— Cursed is anyone who moves boundary markers.

— Cursed is anyone who leads the blind astray.

— Cursed is anyone who deprives a stranger, an orphan, or a widow of their rights.

— Cursed is anyone who lies with his father's wife.

— Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with an animal.

— Cursed is anyone who lies with his sister or half-sister.

— Cursed is anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.

— Cursed is anyone who murders another person.

— Cursed is anyone who kills an innocent person for a reward.

— Cursed is everyone who does not acknowledge the commandments of this law and does not live according to them.

The purpose of the curses sent by God is to make people reevaluate their own lives. Pain is an excellent teacher! Only when he was hungry did the prodigal son "come to his senses," make a complete turnaround, and return to his father. "Then the son came to his senses and thought, 'My father's hired servants have food to spare, but here I am starving to death. No, I will leave and go to my father and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you” (Luke 15:17-18).

God wants to draw our attention to him. He awakens us to realize the direction of our lives when we stray from him. God hopes for a voluntary return to him. He does not want anyone to be lost. He is ready to support, help, bless, and purify us when He is given permission to do so.

The life of King Ahab is an example of how God allows the Enemy to harm and destroy because of ungodliness and disobedience.

“Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the sight of the Lord than any of his predecessors.” (1 Kings 16:30).

“Thus says the Lord: ‘You have let go of the man whom I had destined for destruction. Therefore, your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.’” (1 Kings 20:42).

And the Lord said, "Who will deceive Ahab, so that he goes to war and falls at Ramoth-Gilead?" One answered one thing, another another, until a certain spirit came forward. He stood before the Lord and said, 'I will mislead him. ' 'How?' asked the Lord. The spirit replied, 'I will go and enter the mouth of each of his prophets as a lying spirit. ' 'You will mislead him, you are capable of it. Go and do it.' And so it has happened, the Lord has sent a lying spirit into the mouths of all these prophets. He has decreed disaster for you" (1 Kings 22:20-23)! "A man drew his bow and shot at random, and he hit Ahab, king of Israel, between the joints of his armor. The king said to his charioteer, 'Turn the chariot around and take me away from the battle. I am wounded. But the battle raged fiercely, and so the king had to remain in his chariot on the battlefield all day. In the evening he died, for his blood had drained into the bottom of the chariot” (verses 34-35).

King Ahab was a wicked man. The Lord had decided to end his life. God gave the Devil permission to deceive the king into going to war. In the war, God withdrew His protection, and the king was wounded and died.

If we do not listen to God's warnings about our sins and irresponsibility, the Lord may withdraw His protection from us as well. Then we will be the targets of the merciless Devil.

“God is a righteous judge, and every day he passes judgment. The wicked sharpen their swords, they bend their bows and aim” (Ps. 7:12, 13).

God has taken away his protection.

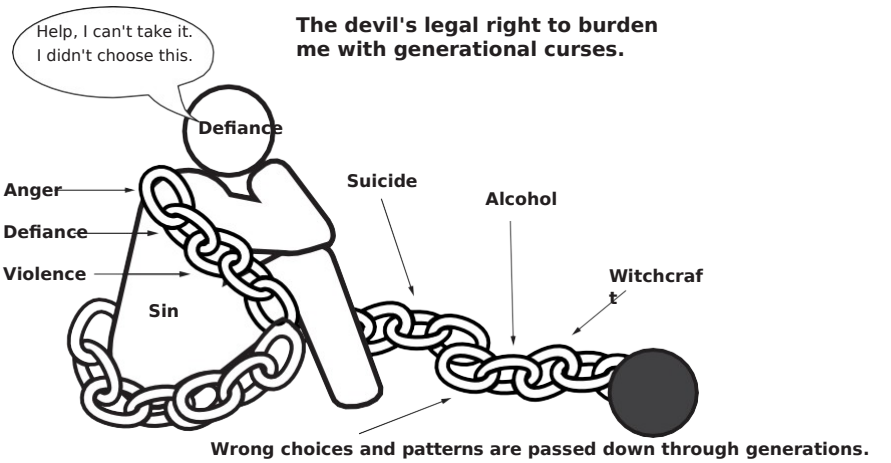
In my pain, I seek God's help. I turn my life around. *"You have given me many years of hardship and many times of distress, but again and again you refresh me; from the depths you lift me up"* (Ps. 71:20).

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; mercy and truth go before you” (Ps. 89:15).

If we voluntarily allow the Devil to attack us through our sins, God will not prevent it. He waits for us to humble ourselves, repent, ask for forgiveness, and make amends. After that, we can pray for His help again.

“Trust in God at all times; bring all your troubles before him, for he will take care of you” (Psalm 62:9). That is why it is important to know God’s word. If we do not know the word and in our ignorance act against God’s will, our enemy will have free rein to send curses into our lives.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. With all my heart I seek your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:9-11).



"The Lord sent afflictions upon them and humbled their defiance. They were broken, and there was no one to help them. But in their distress they cried out to the Lord, and the Lord saved them from their trouble. He redeemed them from the darkness of death and broke their chains" (Ps. 107:12-14).

"Lord, teach me your way, that I may walk in your truth. Imprint your holy fear deep within my heart" (Ps. 86:11).

STRESSES MANIFESTED IN THE FAMILY

We may also inherit evil spirits from our parents or ancestors. We may have to suffer for the sins of past generations. Almost every family has some curses. "You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I will punish the children for the sins of their fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:5, the distorted models of the fathers and the effects of evil deeds are passed on to subsequent generations – editor's note). This is the end of the second commandment of the Ten Commandments, which forbids the making of graven images or idols.

Even though we have given our lives to God, many curses or evil spirits do not automatically disappear from our lives. We must confess to God the sins of our ancestors and ask for forgiveness and freedom from their influence. We must renounce the specific burdens of our family line.

CURSE OF THE FAMILY

"Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel" (Genesis 49:7).

As a result of the Fall, we are genetically predisposed to certain character weaknesses and strengths. The living conditions and atmosphere of our early childhood have left a lasting mark on our lives. The curses of our family in our lives are reminiscent of the original sin. They are passed on in various forms to subsequent generations. The curses that manifest themselves in our family do not in themselves lead us to perdition. They weaken the quality of our lives. These curses are often associated with evil spirits. It is best to break free from them and command them to leave in the name of Jesus and the cross.

We all have different character traits, both positive and negative. Curses arise when these traits manifest themselves in negative actions, insults, neglect, etc.

Curses manifest themselves, for example, as

- pride
- stubbornness
- fears
- depression
- envy
- need for control
- manipulation
- deception
- divorce
- addictions
- weaknesses
- anger
- desire for revenge
- lying
- lust
- interest in pornography
- defiance
- interest in the occult
- practicing witchcraft, etc.

A Christian man whose life was difficult came to me. We prayed about the cause of his anxiety and misfortunes. God revealed to him that his grandfather had bound his entire family to the service of the Devil with his own blood. Before this, the man knew nothing about it. With the sword of God's Holy Spirit, we broke the curses and his grandfather's promises. The man renounced everything in his life that was contrary to God's will. Through the power of Jesus' blood, he received his freedom.

We can renounce the sins of previous generations and receive our new spiritual inheritance in Christ. We are not guilty of the sins of our ancestors, but our vulnerability to the attacks of the Devil has increased because of their actions.

“On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the people of Israel gathered together to fast, wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. The people of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and then they confessed their own sins and the sins of their fathers" (Neh. 9:1-2).

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord! Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were dug” (Isaiah 51:1).

You can pray to God to show you what sins and curses exist in your family and lineage.

Suggested prayer:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly come before You and ask You to bring to my mind the sins, curses, and evil spirits that follow me because of the deeds of previous generations. I want to be freed from all the burdens they cause.

“Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Gal. 5:1). I want to commit myself to being a child of God with my whole being. Thank you for hearing me in the holy name of Jesus, amen.”

Write down everything that the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. Prayer support helps with deliverance. If you find things difficult, draw a family tree and mark the difficulties in the lives of different people. The drawing will reveal similar problems in later generations.

To remain free from the injustices of past generations, read aloud the following **“Declaration**”:

“I have decided to renounce and reject the continuation of my ancestors’ sins in my own life (name the sins and curses revealed by the Holy Spirit). I now choose freedom from the power of darkness. I have moved into the kingdom of the Son of God. I nullify all the work of evil spirits passed down to me from previous generations. My ‘old self’ has been crucified, and I have been raised with Christ to new life. I renounce all the Devil’s commands that target my person or my actions. I nullify every curse placed on my life by the Devil or evil spirits. I reject all appeals made to me by the Devil. I belong exclusively to the Lord Christ, who bought me with His blood. I reject all possible blood sacrifices that would justify the Devil's control over my life. I declare that I am completely and eternally Jesus Christ's own. I now command every evil spirit and enemy of Jesus in my family and in my life to leave my being. I have given myself to my Heavenly Father, and I want to do only His will from now on.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You as Your child, whom You have purchased from the bondage of sin with the blood of Your Son. You are Lord of the universe and Lord of my life. I give You my life as a living sacrifice to reflect only You. I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I also choose to renew my mind to prove that Your will is good, welcome, and perfect in my life. I pray all this in the name and authority of the risen Christ, amen.”*
>
> - Dr. Neil T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, pp. 245-246.

The Bible gives an example of a family curse:

Here we are told about Eelin's sons. "Eelin's sons were worthless men and did not care about the Lord. As priests, they had the following right over the people: whenever someone had slaughtered their sacrifice and was cooking the sacrificial meat, the priest's servant would arrive with a three-pronged fork. He would stick it into the pot, pan, kettle, or jar, and whatever came up on the fork, the priest would take for himself. This was done to all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. But now the priest's servant arrived before the fat was burned and said to the one who was sacrificing, "Give the priest some meat to roast. He does not want cooked meat, but raw meat." If the man replied, "First you must burn the fat, then take what you want," the servant said to him, "No, you must give it immediately, or I will take it by force." The transgression of Eli's sons was very evil in the sight of the Lord, for they profaned the sacrifice belonging to the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:12-17).

“When Eli was very old, he heard what his sons were doing to all the Israelites. He also heard that they were sleeping

with the women who served at the entrance to the tabernacle" (verse 22).

Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the Lord says: Did I not reveal myself to your ancestors when they were slaves in Egypt? I chose your family from among the tribes of Israel to be priests, to serve at the altar, to offer sacrifices, and to wear the ephod before me. I gave your family the right to all the sacrifices that the Israelites bring. Why do you now trample underfoot the sacrifices and offerings that I have commanded for my sanctuary? Why do you think more of your sons than of me? Why do you burn yourselves with the best parts of the sacrifices of my people Israel? Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have promised your family and your father's family that you will always serve me. But now the Lord says: This will not happen! I will honor those who honor me, but those who despise me will be put to shame. The time will come when I will destroy the power of your family, so that no one in your family will live to old age" (1 Sam. 2:27-31).

2 Kings 5:20-27 tells of Gehazi's greed, which arose from his own thoughts. "Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, began to think, 'Why did my master show mercy to this Syrian, not taking what he had brought with him? As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him' (verse 20). This thought was followed by Gehazi's lie, which he told Naaman: 'Gehazi went after Naaman. When Naaman noticed that someone was running after him, he jumped out of his chariot, went to meet him, and asked, 'What's the matter? Gehazi replied, “Nothing. My master sent me to tell you that two young men, disciples of the prophet, have just come to him from the hill country of Ephraim. Could you give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothes?” (verses 21-22).

Gehazi hid the gifts he had received by lying: “When Gehazi came to the upper city, he took the gifts from the servants (who had taken care of them during the journey) and hid them in his house. Then he sent the servants back" (verse 24). Elisha spoke to Gehazi: "When Gehazi returned to his master, Elisha asked him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi? ' 'Nowhere,' he replied. Gehazi lied a second time!" (verse 25). "But Elisha said to him, 'Didn't you see that I was there in spirit when the man got out

of his chariot to meet you? It seems that now was a good opportunity for you to receive silver and acquire clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and cattle, male and female slaves" (verse 26).

As a result of Gehazi's greed, a curse fell upon him. Elisha said to him, "Naaman's leprosy will now cling to you and your descendants, and your family will never be free of it." And when Gehazi left Elisha, he was as white as snow with leprosy (verse 27). In this way, the whole family had to suffer for his sin!

God often leads us through many difficulties so that we may learn to know ourselves better. He tests us to find out if He can trust us. How many curses do human families suffer under? If we want to know the truth about our own lives, we can always pray for clarity. Then we can surrender them to the cross of Christ and renounce them.

We can also learn something from Abraham's life. Abraham lied in Egypt: "Say (Sarah) that you are my sister, so that I may be treated well for your sake and my life may be spared because of you" (Genesis 12:13).

Abraham's son Isaac lied: "When the people of Gerar asked who Rebekah was, Isaac said, 'She is my sister. He did not dare to say that Rebekah was his wife, because he was afraid that the men of the region would kill him because of Rebekah, who was very beautiful" (Genesis 26:7).

Isaac's son Jacob lied to his father: "Isaac asked again, 'Are you really my son Esau?' Jacob replied, 'I am'" (Genesis 27:24).

Jacob's sons lied to their father. Genesis 37:20-33 tells how Joseph was sold into Egypt. The brothers slaughtered a goat, smeared Joseph's coat with its blood, and took the coat to their father. "Jacob recognized the garment and said, 'It is my son's coat! A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has been torn to pieces!

The spirit of lies manifested itself in four generations!

> *Some time ago, a young woman came to me whose grandfather had been a sorcerer in a pagan country. She herself had practiced various forms of witchcraft. She had many difficulties in her life. The woman met a Christian who told her about Jesus and his sacrifice for us. She began to learn about the*

teachings of the Bible with her new friend and to read the Word herself. Finally, she made her own decision and gave her life to God. At the same time, she hoped that the difficulties in her life would disappear. However,

, the opposite happened. Even after her baptism, the enemy did not let go of her. Although she sought help, she could not find it. The people she met did not understand the significance of her family curse in her life.

She began to unburden her heart by confessing her family's sins to God and asking Him for forgiveness.

We commanded the evil spirits to leave and asked God to free the woman from all the burdens of her family. The work is still ongoing in her case, but the Bible promises: "The good work that God has begun in us, he will also bring to completion. "Christ has set us free." We can continue to trust in God's own words.

* * *

A mother came to me asking for help. Her family's relationship with God had completely disappeared. They used to gather together in the mornings and evenings to read the Bible and pray. These moments together had been forgotten in the rush of daily life. There were also many disagreements within the family. I asked if anything special had happened to them when their gatherings ended. She didn't know how to answer. We prayed to God for help.

The woman remembered that the new form of treatment she had received might have allowed evil spirits to enter her. Her neighbor had massaged her using a new relaxation technique. She had not asked any further questions when receiving the treatment. This new form of treatment was based on an Eastern religion unknown to her.

Through this, the Devil cunningly gained access to his family in order to separate them from God. When he realized what had happened, he repented and asked God for forgiveness. After that, I commanded all evil spirits to leave him in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood. He was reconnected with God, and his family devotions continued.

I have met people who have had evil spirits transferred to them through the healing methods of miracle healers. Whether they were aware of this or not, I do not know. I urge caution and recommend finding out the origin of any treatments offered.

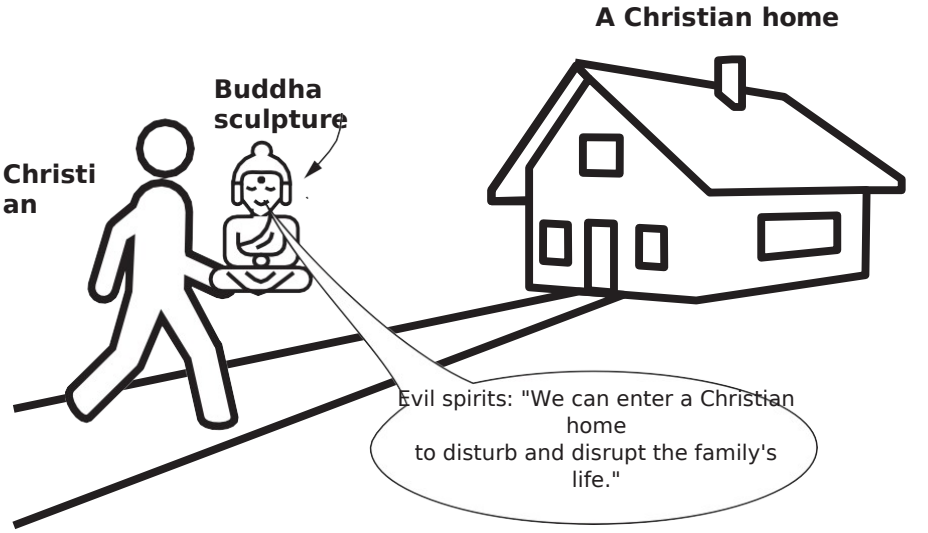
CULT OBJECTS

A Christian woman came to me asking for help. She wanted with all her heart to serve Christ. There was a room in her house where she felt sick. She did not understand why. She also had many difficulties in her life. We prayed together for God to show her the reason for her difficulties. After praying, she remembered a pagan wooden sculpture of a head that was kept in that room. This sculpture was a copy of an idol used in the worship of Satan. We prayed that he would be able to destroy the sculpture and asked God to cleanse his home of evil spirits.

When she returned home, she heated up the oven and threw the wooden sculpture into the fire. Despite the heat, the sculpture did not catch fire. Then the woman commanded in the name of Jesus, "Burn!" The sculpture began to sizzle and burned completely. After that, the woman no longer felt evil in any room of her

house. Amazingly, many of the difficulties in her life also began to diminish.

I discussed this matter with an expert. He told me that in many developing countries, souvenirs are consecrated to the Devil or bound to evil spirits. The expert himself would not bring any pagan objects into his home. Many people who have traveled to distant lands have Buddha statues or pictures, various wooden idols, totems, etc. in their homes. Often, the spirits of their creators accompany them.


A Christian home
Buddha sculpture
Christi an
Evil spirits: "We can enter a Christian home
to disturb and disrupt the family's life."

BREAKING THE CURSE

If the curse has come as a result of sin, it is appropriate to pray aloud. Identify, confess, and acknowledge your sins and the sins of your ancestors. The Holy Spirit's assistance is required in these matters. He can show us the root causes of our problems that require repentance and confession. Often, drawing a family tree helps to reveal the recurrence of illnesses and other problems in subsequent generations.

Confess everything that the Holy Spirit reveals to you, repent, and ask for forgiveness. Pray for purification of your body, soul, mind, and emotions through the blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Renounce everything that God does not approve of and change the direction of your life. Pray that God will remove the curse He has allowed in your life. Then command the evil spirits that you have acquired through your sins to leave. Do this in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood! Also ask the Holy Spirit to fill all the emptiness in your heart.

CUTTING OFF THE DEVIL'S RIGHT TO CURSE YOU

Confess and admit the sin that gave the Devil and his servants a reason to torment you. Repent deeply of your actions and ask God for forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Pray aloud in the name of Jesus Christ:

> *"I now take the sword of the Holy Spirit and cut this curse away from my family and myself. In the name of Jesus Christ, I command all evil spirits connected to this curse to leave me and my life. Jesus, fill me and my family with Your Holy Spirit and give us the strength to resist the temptations of the Devil. I pray all this in Jesus' name."*

BREAKING THE DEVIL'S ATTACKS

Pray aloud:

> *In the name of Jesus Christ, I take control of the effects of this curse (you can name it) and cut it off now from my life and my family with the sword of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus Christ, I command all evil spirits to leave me and my family, especially those spirits that are bound to this curse (e.g., illness, unhappiness, addiction, divorce). Dear God, fill us with Your Holy Spirit and bless us with all the blessings of heaven.*

BREAKING THE CURSE OF THOSE CONSECRATED TO THE DEVIL

I have encountered a few people who have been consecrated or given over to the Devil. The enemy wants to control the children of these people as well. Parents or grandparents who serve the Devil can give their children over to the same power. If your parents or grandparents have been members of a community that serves the enemy of souls, you may also have been consecrated to their master. When an unborn or already born child is consecrated to the Devil, it is the task of evil spirits to keep him or her in that position for the rest of his or her life. This is a kind of ritual without words. Members of these communities promise that their descendants will also serve the same community/master.

If this has been your destiny, you can be freed from your parents' promises or vows. When you choose Christ as the Lord and Savior of your life, the vow made by your parents is broken. The demon that was supposed to ensure your loyalty to the Devil has now become a traitor. Then other demons begin their attacks to disturb the person who has fallen in love with Christ.

I have met such people. Almost everything in their lives goes wrong!

> *Two women came to me for treatment who had lost all their possessions. Both were homeless. They were temporarily living with Christian friends. Both had long ago been consecrated to the service of the Devil. After accepting Christ, their difficulties began. They did not understand why God allowed evil spirits to attack them. The enemy gets angry when he is left alone. He does everything he can to prevent God from receiving glory in people's lives. Through prayer warfare, all curses and attacks can be overcome.*

Confess the sins of your parents or grandparents and ask God to forgive them. Also pray for the cleansing of your heart. Ask God to completely separate you from the sins of previous generations.

Renounce every oath or promise that binds your life to serving the devil. Declare to the enemy and his forces that you are committed to Jesus Christ.

Command all demons bound to your life to leave you in the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of His blood, because Jesus is the Lord of your life. In the name of Jesus Christ, command all destructive forces that have manifested in your life since your decision to leave.

- Rebecca Braun MD, Unbroken curses, pp. 41-42.

If you have been subjected to a satanic ritual, here is a model of renunciation:

THE RULE OF DARKNESS	KINGDOM OF LIGHT
I want my name removed from the Devil's book.	I want my name in the Book of Life.
I renounce all rituals of worshiping Satan.	I am now the bride of Christ.
I renounce all pacts, covenants, and promises I have made with Satan.	I declare that I have made a new covenant with Christ, and this covenant breaks all previous covenants and agreements.
I renounce all of Satan's decrees in my life and in the life of my family.	I declare and bind myself only to God's will and accept only His guidance in my life and the life of my family.
I renounce all spirit guides.	I declare that I accept only the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
I renounce my own bloodline in the service of Satan.	
I renounce my own blood covenant in the service of Satan.	I trust only in the blood shed by my Lord Jesus on my behalf.
I renounce the flesh and blood sacrificed to Satan, which I ate and drank in Satan's service.	In faith, I take the Lord's Holy Communion, which symbolizes the body of Jesus.
I renounce my guardians/foster parents who worship Satan.	I declare that God is my Father and the Holy Spirit watches over me and has sealed me.
I renounce all baptisms of Satan worship that bind me to Satan.	I declare that I have been baptized into Jesus Christ, to whom I am committed with my whole being.
I renounce every satanic sacrifice made on my behalf.	Jesus' sacrifice on my behalf is sufficient for me, and I belong to Him alone.

(Dr. Neil T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, pp. 212-213).

In your battles, you may need the prayer support of a pastor who understands the Devil's methods and is familiar with spiritual warfare. I want to warn you: Do not mock the Devil!

It is easy for believers to develop a proud attitude toward life and imagine that nothing can touch or harm us. As born-again Christians, we are too quick to trust that the Devil can no longer touch us. This attitude is misleading. It opens the door to attacks from the enemy.

“Be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV).

“All these deceivers act in the same way. They defile their bodies, despise the Lord and his power, and blaspheme the spirits. Even the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil over the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a charge of blasphemy against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

But these people blaspheme what they do not understand, and by what they naturally, like irrational animals, feel, they bring destruction upon themselves" (Jude: 8-9).

> “We have a truly cruel and ruthless enemy. I mentioned just a couple of Bible verses that help us respect and understand his power. If we treat him with contempt or frivolity, we can expect him to attack us. No human being can resist or defeat him on their own. Only through the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection do we have the ability to resist him. Our lives will be better when we keep this in mind!” – Rebecca Braun, MD, Unbroken Curses, pp. 111–112.

Even the smallest beginning can lead to something big! A single tree can eventually grow into a forest. A single smile can start a friendship. A single helping hand can lift up a neighbor in need. A single word can encourage the oppressed. A single candle can dispel the darkness. One laugh can lift someone out of depression. One glimmer of hope can lift someone out of despair. One person can have a big impact on us. One decision can bring a big change in life. One step can start a long journey. One touch can give someone faith in caring.

One prayer can change another person's life.

You could be the

one whose closeness makes a difference in someone's life!

5 TOWARDS INNER

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

Jesus Christ has set us free. He conquered sin and death by sacrificing himself on the cross. If we have fallen into sin, we are responsible for returning to God. God is ready to guide us through this process of repentance, restoration, and liberating truth. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

Suggested prayer (I would encourage you to pray aloud):

> *“Dear Heavenly Father! You are the almighty and all-powerful God. I am completely dependent on you. I can do nothing on my own. You have all power in heaven and on earth. I ask: “Fill me with the Holy Spirit and lead me into truth. I pray for your protection and guidance in my life. I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen!”*

The first step toward inner freedom in Christ is to renounce any past or present lifestyle that is contrary to God's will, e.g., practicing occultism, witchcraft, related rituals, or non-Christian ways of thinking.

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father! By the authority given to Jesus’ own, I command all evil spirits, especially mind-binding spirits, to leave me so that I may freely choose God’s will in my life. Dear God, bring to my mind everything I have done against you, consciously or unconsciously, my involvement in occult matters, witchcraft, non-Christian teachings or behavior, etc. I want to experience the inner freedom you give and break away from the past right now. I pray*

this in Jesus' name!

EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS AGAINST GOD'S WILL:

- out-of-body experience *(astral projection)*
- use of Ouija boards
- visits to fortune tellers
- Tarot cards
- witchcraft
- palmistry
- horoscopes
- hypnosis
- object worship
- casual sexual relationships
- many martial arts and self-defense disciplines
- yoga
- occult, violent films
- violent computer games

— Have you ever seen or felt the presence of a spirit in your room?

— Do you often have nightmares?

— Do you currently have or have you ever had imaginary friends, a spirit guide, or an "angel" who wants to be your friend? Does it have a name?

— Have you heard a voice speaking in your head or do you hear critical statements in your mind: "I'm stupid!" "I'm ugly!" "Nobody loves me!" "I can't do anything right!"

— Do you feel like there is a conversation going on in your head?

— Have you visited a medium or a witch?

— Have you ever made a secret pact or promise with evil spirits or their representatives?

— Have you participated in rituals to worship the Devil or attended a concert dedicated to the Devil?

— Do you have other spiritual experiences that you found evil, confusing, and frightening?

Once you have gone through the list, confess your sins one by one to God and renounce them!

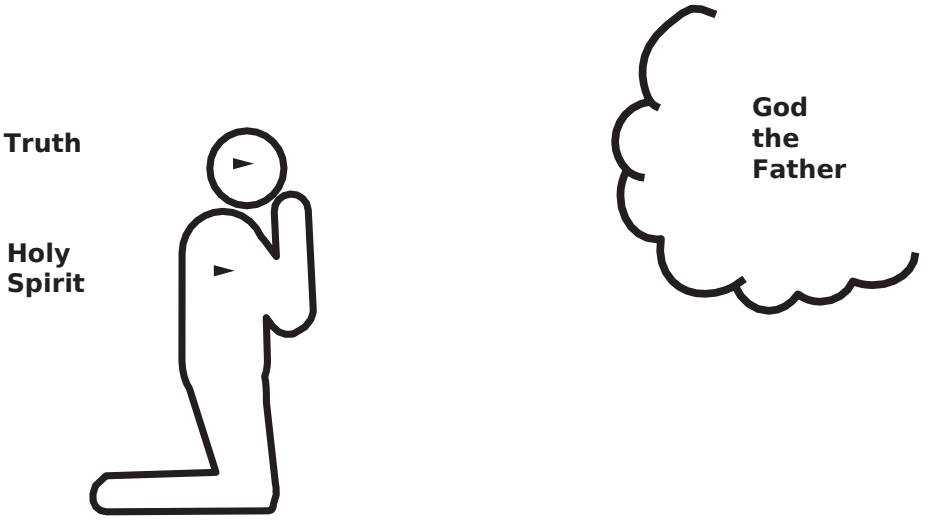
Suggested prayer:

> *"Lord God, I confess to You my involvement in (name the thing). I understand that it was against Your will. Forgive me for Christ's sake! Thank You for Your forgiveness! I renounce all my involvement in (name the thing/things) and command the enemy to leave these areas of my life. I pray this in Jesus' name."*

BREAK AWAY FROM YOUR IDOLS!

In life, we serve what is most important to us. Our thoughts, our attachments, our trust, our obedience, even our worship are directed toward this object. Such an object is in fact our god/false god!

However, we are meant to serve the living, true God. God the Father seeks those who serve Him in spirit and in truth. "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Such are the worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23).



“We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. My children, keep yourselves from false gods!” (1 John 5:20-21).

The false god takes the place of the true God. Even though we do not actually kneel before our false gods, it has always been easy for us humans to replace God with something that is important to us.

The following prayer expresses the choice of the heart: “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only’” (Matthew 4:10).

Suggested prayer:

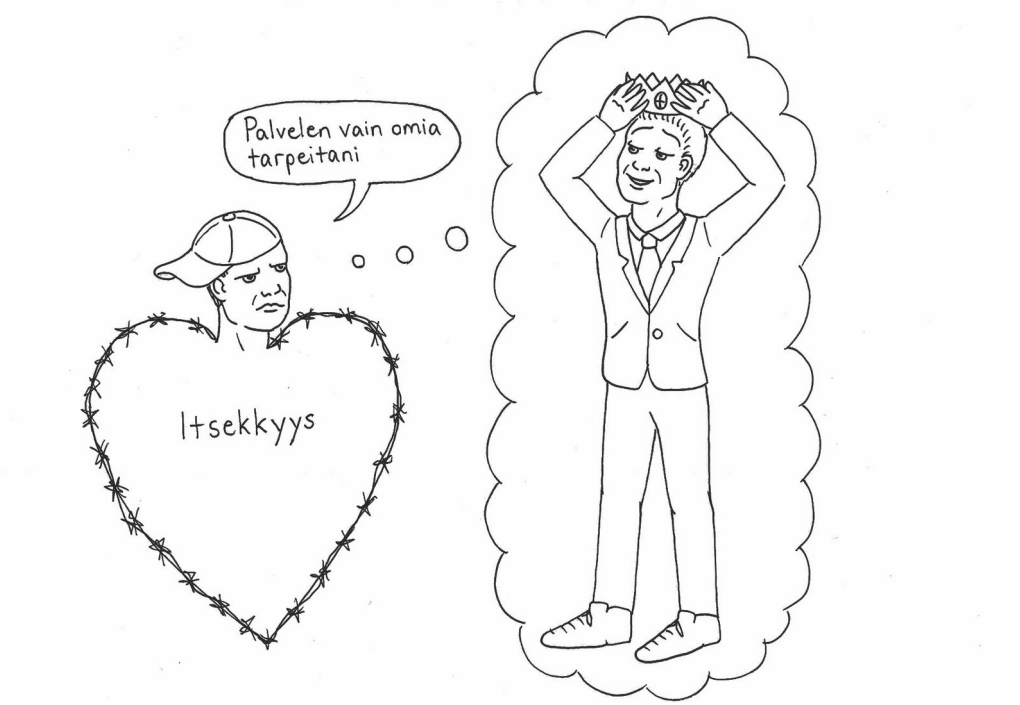
> *“Dear God, I admit how easily other things and people become more important to me than you in my life. I understand that this hurts you, because you deserve all worship, service, and thanksgiving.I confess before You that I have not loved You with all my heart, all my soul, and all my mind. (Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). In this way, I have broken your first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). I deeply repent and turn away from serving idols. I choose to return from my ways to you, my Lord and Savior, my first love. I ask you to bring to my mind all my idols! I want to renounce them all and surrender the areas of my life ruled by idols to your control. I pray this in the name of the living Christ, amen!”*

“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the deeds you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (Rev. 2:4-5).

The following list can help us identify areas that have taken priority in our lives. Not all of them are bad or reprehensible in themselves. It is a question of their place in our lives.

- ambition
- food, stimulants
- money, the security that wealth brings
- ideals
- sports
- church activities
- media in its various forms
- music
- entertainment
- appearance
- work/position at work
- friends, spouse, partner, children, parents
- knowledge, being right
- hobbies

What idols dwell in your heart that you unknowingly serve?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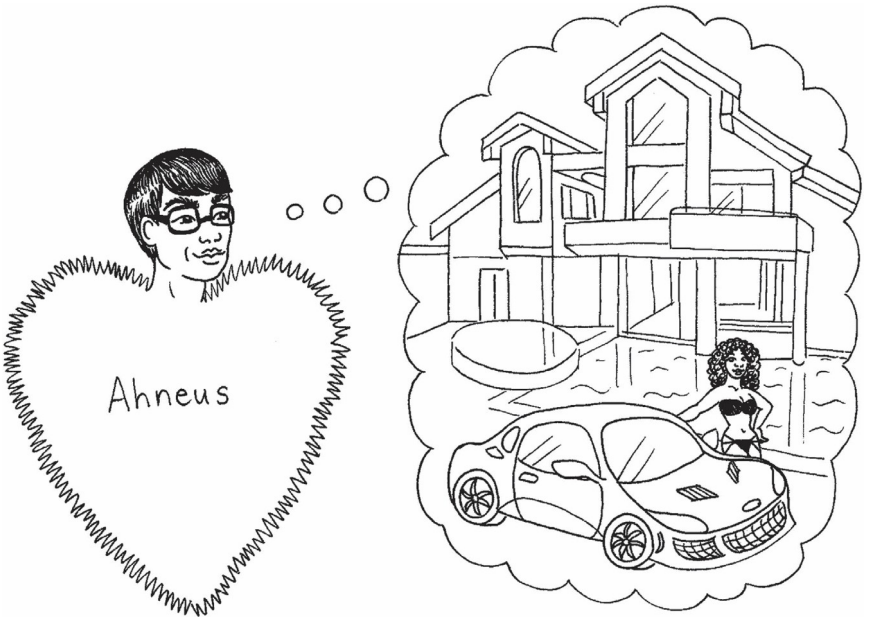
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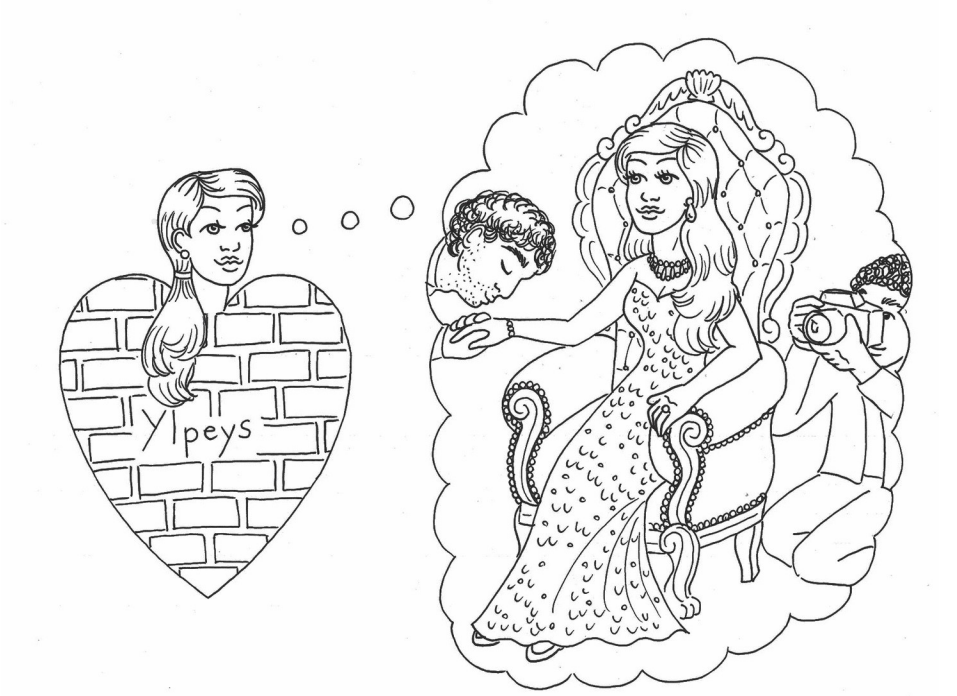
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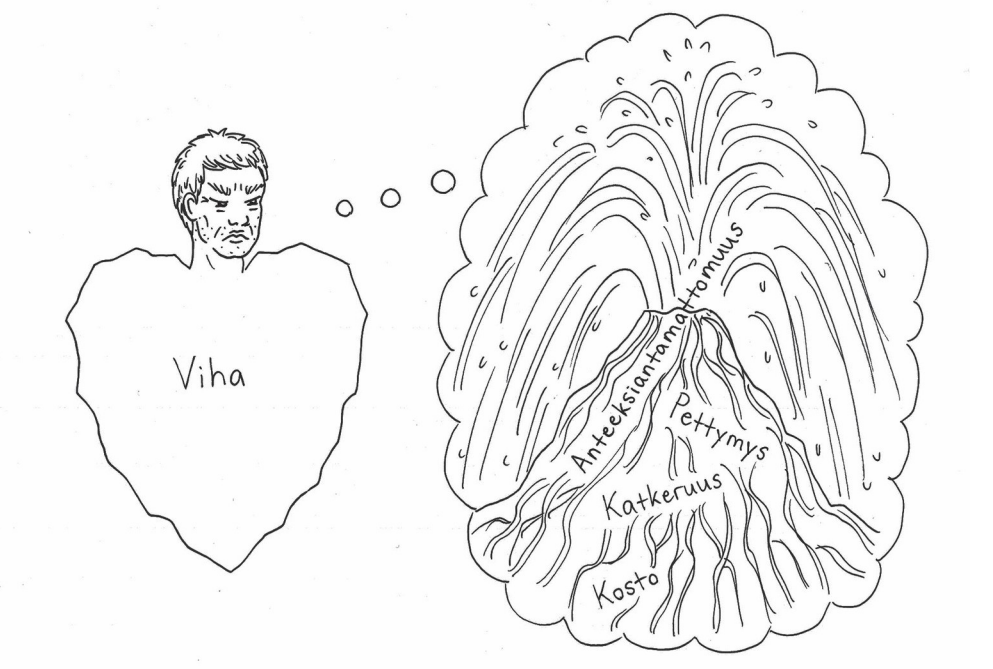
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If you have recognized your own idols, you can choose to break away from your distorted relationship with these areas of life.

Suggested prayer:

> *In the name of the living God and Jesus Christ, I renounce (name the thing/person/object) that I have put before God. Today, I choose to serve my Savior and let Him guide my life. I ask You, Father God, to give me the strength to keep the different areas of my life in order according to Your will. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen!"*

If you have participated in devil worship and practiced occultism for a long time, confess all your deeds to God separately. Ask for forgiveness and verbally renounce them. Ask God to cleanse you of all unrighteousness.
- Dr. Neil Andersson, The Bondage Breaker, pp. 203-211.

THE SPIRIT OF REBELLION/DEFIANCE IN THE HEART

“A person’s own foolishness leads them astray, yet they are still bitter toward the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3).

“In the end, when you are exhausted, you will sigh, ‘Why did I hate instruction and despise correction? Why did I not listen to my teachers and pay no attention to those who instructed me?’” (Proverbs 5:11-13).

We live in rebellious and selfish times. Many young people, like adults, rebel against everything. Many want to live a life without limits or responsibility. If the spirit of rebellion lives in the heart, there is no interest in reevaluating life, because self-discipline has been lost. It is difficult to live with such a person. This state of mind is accompanied by dissatisfaction and victimization, even self-destruction. Feelings of anger are directed toward God. This kind of spirit was also present in

the enemy of souls. We have all experienced disappointment, even anger toward God, in connection with certain life experiences.

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, and God is speaking to you through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

How do you see yourself? Are you satisfied with your life? Are there unhealed wounds in your heart? Do you suffer from guilt? Do you have feelings of anger or rebellion toward God?

Be honest with yourself! If we reject the inner freedom that is offered to us, we offend ourselves and Christ.

"You used to live in the power of those things (transgressions and sins), obeying the ruler of the spirits in the realm of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who disobey" (Eph. 2:2).

Symptoms of a rebellious spirit:

- desire to die
- low energy levels
- susceptibility to illness and accidents
- discomfort in the company of other people
- rebellion against loved ones
- low self-esteem
- difficulties in sexual life
- imbalance between mind and body
- unwillingness to fulfill one's place in life

The roots of rebellion often stem from early childhood. This spirit can also be inherited. We may need prayer to help us break free from it.

How can we help someone who is rebellious?

They need to understand that this spirit only causes them more pain and disappointment. Rebellion is essentially a distancing from God.

Humbling ourselves before God, asking for forgiveness, and forgiving others are essential for returning to God. “If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father, you say in your word that ‘rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft’ (1 Sam. 15:23). I acknowledge my rebellion against you and other authorities. I did not choose to be born here, into this particular family or circumstances. I confess that I have blamed You in my heart for everything. I have judged authorities who could have been more just and wise toward me. I have been angry with You for my shortcomings. At the same time, I have believed the lies of the Devil! I understand that other imperfect people have hurt me. Today, I choose to forgive them. My own negative reactions have caused friction both for myself and those around me. I ask God for forgiveness. I have hurt you with my dissatisfaction and been ungrateful for the gift of life. I accept my destiny. From now on, I want to be a channel of your blessings to those around me. I pray for the strength to be obedient to the Holy Spirit. Free me to enjoy the abundant life you have prepared for me! Amen.”*

If the spirit of rebellion is common in your family, confess it to God and ask for forgiveness. With the authority given by Jesus, you can command the spirit of rebellion to leave your life. Pray this in Jesus' name.

BITTERNESS

In my pastoral work, the problem most people have is bitterness. I try to help people forgive the injustices they have

experienced and let go of their painful memories.

We can surrender our right to bitterness to God! When we do that, we are more ready to forgive. Then the healing of our emotions progresses deeper and deeper in our hearts.

Unforgiveness inflames our emotional life. When we are hurt, we usually become angry. If we hold on to our right to anger and believe that it gives us strength, we are deceiving ourselves! In these situations, the angry party feels superior to the offender. In this way, the Devil seeks to gain control over our minds. The evil caused by anger easily turns into bitterness and unforgiveness.

We cannot change what we have experienced, but we can change our attitude toward it by choosing forgiveness. “Whom you forgive, I also forgive; and what I have forgiven—if there is anything to forgive—I have forgiven for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:10-11).

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in love God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

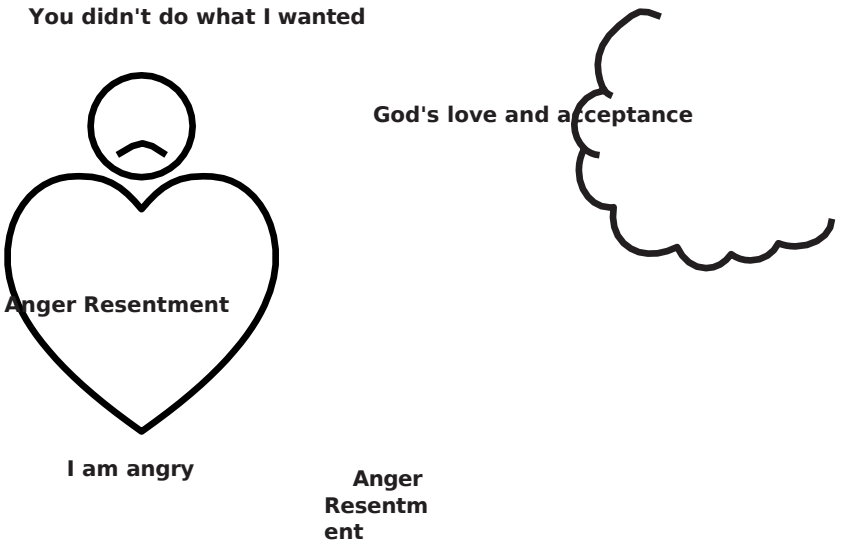
You can ask God to bring to mind all the people you need to forgive.

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for your mercy and love toward me. I know that your patience and goodness will lead me to repentance. I confess that I have not shown patience toward my neighbors. I have chosen hatred and bitterness. I pray that you will help me remember all those I have been bitter toward, and I choose to forgive them today. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”*

“Do you despise God’s great kindness, patience, and forbearance? Do you not understand that God’s kindness leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

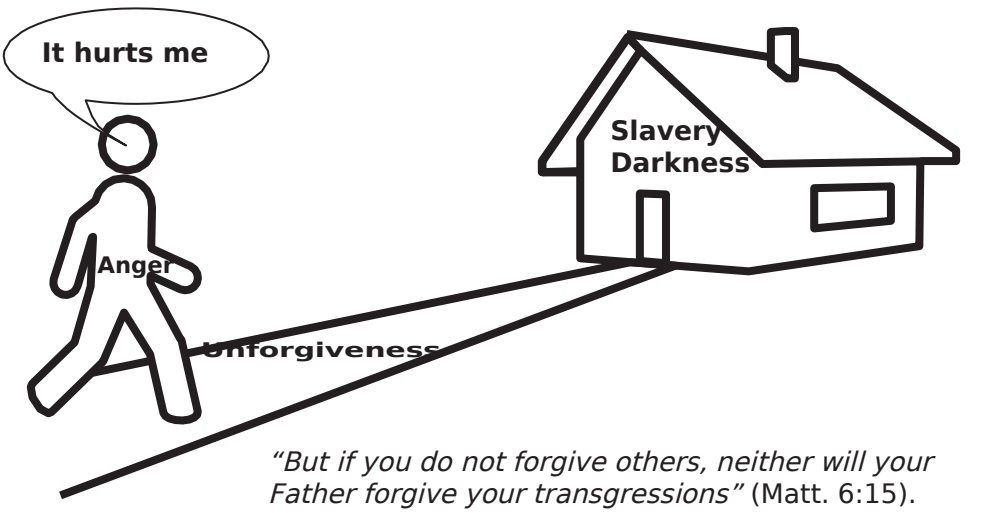
Write down the names of the people who come to mind! Often we have to write down our own names, because we may be holding on to self-hatred. We punish ourselves for our wrong choices. Sometimes our anger is directed at God because He did not intervene in the way we wanted Him to. If we harbor anger toward God, a wall of resentment rises between us.



UNFORGIVENESS IN THE HEART

- Self-esteem weakens
- Insecurity increases
- Addictions increase
- stress levels rise
- self-control weakens, which can lead to violent behavior
- increased likelihood of illness
- heart begins to harden

"I don't even understand what I'm doing: I don't do what I want, but what I hate. And if I do what I don't want, then I admit that the law is good. So I no longer do what I do, but sin lives in me" (Rom. 7:15-17).



"But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions" (Matt. 6:15).

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a choice. It can be a difficult thing to do, because our sense of justice demands compensation for the wrongs we have experienced. Sometimes we want to punish those who have hurt us.

In the early stages of forgiveness, God may bring forgotten, painful memories to our minds. It is important to accept these memories and feelings without resistance.

Choose to forgive the offender and surrender your painful feelings at the foot of Christ's cross. Leave them there! Ask Jesus to heal the wounds in your heart and emotional life.

God's will is to free us from our burdens. There is no need to explain away or understand other people's bad behavior.

Suggested prayer:

> *"Dear God, today I choose to forgive (person's name) and forgive their actions/words or omissions.*

This experience made me feel (name the feeling). Ju-mala, my heart is open, take this painful feeling away from my heart and nail it to the cross of Golgotha, where it belongs. You died so that I might live. "God, create in me a clean heart and renew me, give me a new strong spirit" (Ps. 51:12). I bless my offender and pray that my changed attitude will have a positive effect on our relationship. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen!

“Take care to get along with one another, forgiving one another, even if you have cause for complaint. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also forgive one another” (Col. 3:13). Jesus set an example for us while hanging on the cross. “But Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34).

A woman came to me asking for help with her back pain. She had had two back surgeries, but they had not helped. I asked her about her life since childhood. Her childhood had been difficult. God was not part of her life. She had transferred her difficult experiences to her body. She did not understand how to get rid of her pain.

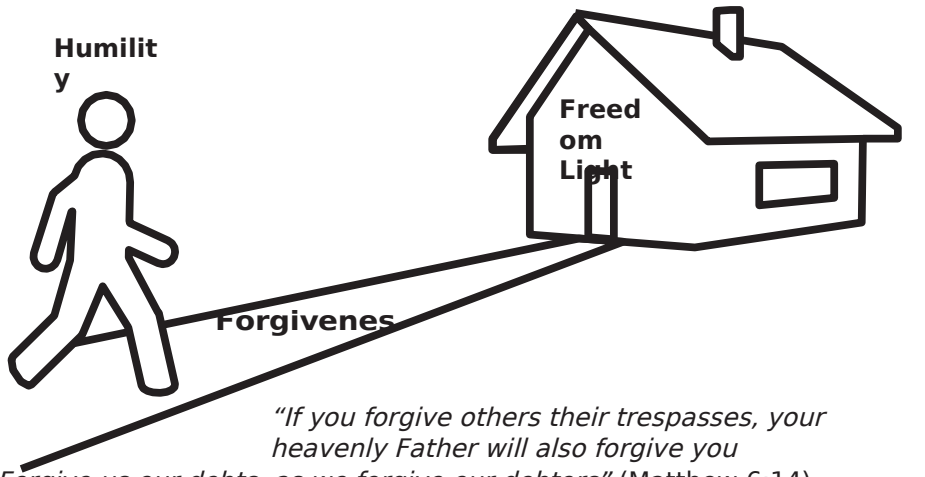
I assured her of the power of forgiveness as medicine for the soul. Painful feelings must be allowed to be released and surrendered to God. Then she can ask for healing for the wounds and bruises in her emotional life. We prayed to God to show her whom she should forgive. The woman chose to forgive everyone who had hurt her. She also asked forgiveness for her own sins. She gave herself permission to cry out the pain from her heart. After each of our meetings, her back pain began to ease. When her heart was emptied of

unforgiveness, her back gradually healed.

Have you hidden painful feelings in your body? Are you ready to face them, release them, and give them to God?

Forgiveness is obeying God's will. It frees us from many of our inner chains. He wants to help us break free!

There is no other way to freedom.



"If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:14).

THE POWER OF SWEARING

Examples of swearing:

— I hate my angry aunt. I don't want to be like her.

— I never want to be like my father. I can't stand people like that!

— I won't let a man control me like my father did.

— I won't listen to other women's opinions!

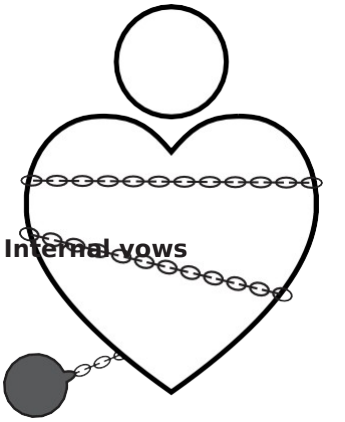
Internal vows are realized when the will feeds the emotion and a decision is made in the mind. Such decisions can be both negative and positive. Negative decisions are influenced by experiences that have resulted in feelings of anger. Growing children and young people make these decisions and forget

them as natural and part of life. Strong decisions/vows sink into the subconscious and affect everyday life.

"Therefore, you cannot defend yourself, poor human being, you who judge others, whoever you are. When you judge another, you also condemn yourself, because you, the judge of others, do the same things yourself" (Rom. 2:1).

Self-esteem issues/inner vows:

- I don't want to appear weak
- I don't want anyone near me, at least not to love me
- men don't control me
- I don't listen to women
- I don't have to listen to anyone
- I want to control my own life.



Internal vows bind and imprison us, making us feel and think according to our vows.

Internal vows are obstacles to life changes and Christian growth. They do not disappear on their own, even if we do not remember their origin. Over time, they turn into attitudes. When someone else reminds us in one way or another of our past experiences and the behavior that led to our vows, we feel an inexplicable anger rising within us.

A man came to see me. He had many difficulties in his life. What bothered him most was the decision he had made in his adolescence not to marry a woman like his mother. However, this vow bound him to marry a woman just like his mother. He himself wondered how he had found such a woman! He was unhappy and dissatisfied with his marriage.

Once she understood the reason for her choice, it became easier. This shackle was broken, and she saw herself and her life in a different light. Her inner growth continued. However, happiness in her marriage did not return.

* * *

Two sisters came to me whose father had kept other women during their childhood while he was married. Their parents divorced. The daughters identified with the painful feelings their mother had experienced. Both vowed never to behave like their father. Now they were about 40 years old. Both had fallen for another man during their marriages. Their infidelities stemmed from this vow. They did not know about each other's similar experiences.

We prayed that God would break the power of the curse in both their lives with the sword of the Holy Spirit. They chose to forgive their father, who was already dead. God, in His mercy, set them free, and their lives have continued without any setbacks.

I have met Christians who have a need to manipulate others. Many of them do this unconsciously. It may be that they were controlled as children. This can lead to a clear decision not to let others control them anymore. Such firm decisions can be likened to bonds that bind a person. The enemy of the soul is happy to reinforce the bond. He wants to support the decision and at the same time gain a foothold in the person's heart.

An alternative to resentment would be to forgive the person for their behavior and thus free up your own emotional life. A person who clings tightly to resentment sets a poor example for others. Often we do not have the power to control

ourselves. As Christians, we have a special opportunity to surrender control of our lives to God. We can ask for His help and strength in different situations in life. “Ask, and it will be given to you” (Matt. 7:7).

How can we break our inner vows?

If you remember the situation that led you to make an internal vow, it is easy to help. If you don't remember, but find yourself getting angry over trivial matters and wondering why, the vows are still unresolved in your subconscious.

In pastoral care situations, I pray that God will show those in need of help where their difficulties stem from! Once the Holy Spirit has revealed this, we can move forward. In situations of inner conflict, it is essential to forgive those who have irritated or offended us. We must also ask God for forgiveness for our own spirit of judgment toward others. Then, with the authority given by Jesus, I ask God to cut off the power of inner cursing in this person's life with the sword of the Holy Spirit, in the name and power of Jesus. After that, I pray that God will fill this person's heart with the Holy Spirit and bless them with all the blessings of heaven.

“Truly, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). “Let your love be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9).

Have you sworn something in your own life that you are still suffering from today?

THE SPIRIT OF DEATH

“Cursed be the day I was born, without blessing the day my mother gave birth to me! Cursed be the man who brought my father the good news and congratulated him, saying, ‘A son has been born to you!’ May that man be like the cities that the Lord destroyed without mercy! May he hear the cry of lamentation in the morning, the alarm in the midst of the day, because he did not kill me in the womb! My mother would have been my grave, and she would have remained pregnant for the rest of her life! Why did I have to come out of my mother's womb to see nothing but trouble and pain! My whole life is spent in

shame" (Jer. 20:14-18).

People who have been in these states of mind have come to me seeking help. The spirit of death can settle in our minds in many ways. For example, when we are deeply disappointed with our lives, death may come to mind as a way out of this misery. When we start to dwell on these thoughts, we open the door to evil spirits. Close encounters with death can also remain buried in the mind. Negative thoughts, fears, restlessness, insomnia, etc. may plague us after such an experience.

If a child has fallen into water and nearly drowned, the fear of death can cause an evil spirit to take up residence in their heart. A child who has been subjected to an abortion attempt may also experience rejection and sabotage their own life.

In some families, the spirit of death passes from one generation to the next.

A rough, fear-ridden man came to me. He had difficulty being in close relationships. On the other hand, he was very successful in business. We first addressed his fears and dealt with them. We prayed to God to reveal the origin of his problems. The Holy Spirit led him back to his time in the womb.

"Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps. 139:12-13). "From birth you have been my support, from the womb you have been my helper. I will always sing your praises" (Ps. 71:6).

The man's eyes were closed during prayer. Suddenly he said, "They are coming to kill me!" He sank into a fetal position and began to cry uncontrollably. I held his hands and encouraged him to cry out all his pain. In his mind, he saw himself trying to retreat further into the womb

from those who wanted to abort him. I prayed to God to heal the fears in this little fetus's heart and to bless him with all the blessings of heaven. I commanded

the spirit of death to leave the man by the authority of Jesus and the power of his blood.

As he left, the man called his father. He asked his father if they had tried to abort him. His father told him that his brother had been aborted! His father had never mentioned this son! The man felt in his heart that they had also wanted him dead. God, in His mercy, healed the wounds in the man's heart.

The greatest miracle was that his divorced wife wanted to return to him. Their children rejoiced at the restoration of their parents' relationship. This man accepted Christ into his life.

It seems incredible that someone can get hold of their feelings from the womb. God, in His omniscience, can heal the very part of our personality that we pray for.

Suggested prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have not accepted myself and the life you have given me as your gift. I ask for forgiveness and want to break free from all self-destructive thoughts and practices (cutting, substance abuse, etc.). The devil has wanted to steal, destroy, and ruin my life. I do not want to be under his control in this matter either. I choose Christ and surrender my heart to the control of my Savior. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Thank you for forgiving me. I also choose to forgive myself for all my wrong choices. In the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood, I cast out the spirit of death from me. Dear Jesus, fill my heart with Your Holy Spirit, cleanse me, and

strengthen my spirit.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Every morning, choose Jesus as the Lord of your life and rejoice in your future with him.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness" (John 12:46).

"Whoever has my commands and keeps them loves me. And my Father loves those who love me, and I love them and show myself to them" (John 14:21).

FREEDOM FROM THE DEVIL'S CAPTIVITY

It is important to understand the difference between healing prayer and deliverance prayer.

Healing prayer is a request directed to God. We humbly pray for His help and for the healing of a person's wounds and injuries. We are His creatures and cannot command our Creator. We can only pray for His help!

Deliverance is a command directed at evil spirits. They are commanded to leave and leave their target in peace. This command is backed by God's authority when we act in the name of Jesus and in the power of His blood. "This went on for many days, until Paul lost his patience, turned around, and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!' And it came out at that moment" (Acts 16:18).

In deliverance situations, it helps to know the person's past. Then you can make a preliminary assessment of how the evil spirits have gained a foothold. Each meeting should begin with prayer, asking Jesus for wisdom, guidance, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He gives us strength and confirms our authority to cast out evil spirits. It is also necessary to ask for angelic protection. They fight on our behalf.

We can instruct evil spirits:

- We forbid evil spirits in the name of Jesus from calling on other spirits to help them.
- An evil spirit can only express itself with the permission of the Lord Jesus.
- It is not given the right to cause physical pain, mental anguish, or bad behavior in the person being delivered.
- An evil spirit is not allowed to speak disrespectfully, because it defies the Lordship of Jesus.
- The evil spirit is not given the right to use the person seeking liberation in any way. It must remain in its own form.
- If an evil spirit does not obey the instructions given, it defies the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Ed. M. Smith, Theophostic ministry seminar workshop, p. 42.

Practical instructions for the support person:

— Practice compassion. Keep your own feelings of anger under control. Do not hurt those who need help. It will only increase their shame and self-hatred.

— Pay attention to your tone of voice. Speak gently. When you believe that Jesus has power in this matter too, you can speak in a quiet voice. Evil spirits have good ears. When they perceive your calmness and control of the situation, they will obey your commands. Raising your voice or shouting at the devil shows insecurity or anger. You need to be careful that the person you are helping does not interpret this as anger towards them. If you make the mistake of using your voice without thinking, the evil spirits may mock you and not go away.

— Looking into the eyes is necessary, even meaningful. The eyes can reveal the evil spirit dwelling in a person (recognition requires experience). Evil spirits are afraid to look into the eyes. If an evil spirit controls a person, they will not want to look you in the eyes but will look away. In my own experience in these situations, I command them in the name of Jesus to look me in the eyes.

— Mutual contact. There are two opposing views on contact. One warns against touching a person who is under the control of an evil spirit. My

experience is that the evil spirit feels pressure to leave when I place my hands on the person I am helping. Touch can speed up their departure.

A woman who had long practiced occultism and witchcraft came to me. At each of our meetings, many evil spirits left her. On one occasion, they attacked me with their words. I was not immediately sure whether it was the woman herself speaking or the evil spirits speaking through her. I prayed quietly for special wisdom and God's power. I said nothing but sat next to the woman, put both my hands around her head, and prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance and fullness for her. I commanded the evil spirits to leave in the name of Jesus. They left as the woman burst into loud sobs. I encouraged her to cry out all her pain. She cried for about 20 minutes, after which she felt much better. We have met a few more times since then. She has been freed from the great darkness in which she previously lived. She has given her heart to Christ and is following him.

Prayer of deliverance:

By the power and authority given to Jesus, evil spirits must leave in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood. Command to leave: If the evil spirit can be named, it is commanded to leave by name. Command form: Leave immediately! Instructions for leaving: Leave quietly without hurting anyone or doing anything evil. Christ himself will show the evil spirit where to go."

- Francis MacNutt, Deliverance from Evil Spirits, p. 175.

The above instructions are a general model for deliverance prayer. It is not the only possible model. You can develop your own model for this work.

When the Devil is asked to leave, it is not a polite request but a command given by the authority of Jesus. If the evil spirit senses uncertainty in the helper, it will begin to intimidate them, for example, by pretending to be more powerful. At that point, you must have God-given armor and faith in Christ as the conqueror of all evil. Only by relying on the merits of Jesus' innocent blood can you command evil spirits to leave another person. Christ earned this right on the cross.

Before the prayer of deliverance, the person must confess and repent of their sins and ask God for forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Without this, the evil spirit has a legal right over the person.

When the evil spirit has left, pray that God will fill the space that has been freed up in the person’s heart with the Holy Spirit and the presence of Jesus.

“He wanted to make known to them how glorious this mystery is, which is to be revealed to all nations: Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). ("To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of the mystery, which among the Gentiles is in Christ Jesus, the glory of the hope of glory" VK)

“God has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and he remains faithful to his word” (1 Cor. 1:9).

During the prayer of deliverance, I ask the person to remain silent. Often, the evil spirit tries to interfere in some way, for example, by speaking in tongues. I forbid any kind of interference. The person should also pray quietly to God for help and be willing to be freed from evil spirits. If at some point they need to cough, yawn, cry, or even scream, it should be allowed. Often these signs indicate that the evil spirits are leaving. However, they often leave quietly.

“Arise, shake yourself from the dust; sit on your throne, O Jerusalem! Loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!” (Isaiah 52:2).

It is good to begin prayer by breaking the bonds of the soul that are contrary to God's will between the person in need and their

parents, spouse, children, and possible ex-spouse.

Similarly, soul ties must be severed, for example, between a person and someone who has abused them, as well as soul ties to all casual sexual partners before or during marriage. Casual sexual contacts form soul ties to these people and open the doors of the heart to evil spirits. Therefore, these ties must first be severed.

Many people have come to me who have acquired evil spirits through casual relationships. They did not know about their partner's lifestyle.

“Because they did not value the knowledge of God, God gave them over to worthless thoughts, to do what is not right” (Rom. 1:28).

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming upon the disobedient” (Col. 3:5-6).

If an abortion has been performed, the bond between the mother and the child, as well as between the mother and the child’s father, must be severed with the sword of the Holy Spirit. If the father of the aborted child is the woman’s spouse, the bond is not severed. If the woman has experienced a miscarriage, the soul bond to the lost fetus is severed.

Next, all curses passed down through the person’s family line are severed, including verbal curses and evil spirits passed down through the family.

Finally, the person is blessed and prayed for, asking for the Holy Spirit to fill them and for the fruits of the Spirit to manifest in their life. We also ask that she may be a light in this dark world and fulfill the purpose God has designed for her.” - John Eckhardt, Deliverance and Spiritual Warfare, p. 29.

BREAKING THE BONDS OF THE SOUL

“Save yourself like a gazelle, like a bird from the hands of a hunter” (Proverbs 16:5, VK).

You can break the bonds of your soul yourself or ask for prayer support.

Suggested prayer:

> *"Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to break free from the bondage of my soul (name) that is contrary to Your will. Cut it off, God, with the sword of the Holy Spirit, so that I may be freed from this person to whom I am bound by the bonds of my soul, in the name of Jesus!"*

Soul ties are formed as a result of close relationships. There are therefore soul ties that are approved by God and soul ties that are contrary to His will. Soul ties that are contrary to God's will can be manipulative and controlling, preventing us from obeying God's will.

Bonds of the soul approved by God: The Bible tells us about Jonathan, who loved David as much as his own life. "After the conversation between David and Saul, Jonathan became attached to David and loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1).

The devil would like to bind us in ways that are contrary to God's will, making it more difficult for us to build constructive, lasting relationships that are in accordance with God's will.

"Do you not know that whoever is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh. ' But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Corinthians 6:16–17).

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

SOUL BONDS ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

— **The desire to be close to another person.** "Now the daughters-in-law wept even more bitterly. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi. Then Naomi said, 'Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods. You should go with her. But Ruth said, 'Don't urge me to leave you or

to turn back from following you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God' (Ruth 1:14-16).

— **The desire to fulfill another's wishes.** "Jonathan said to David, 'I will do whatever you want me to do'" (1 Sam. 20:4).

— **The desire to share material possessions with others.** “He (Jonathan) took off his robe and gave it to David, along with his tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt” (1 Sam. 18:4).

— **Compassion for others.** “Jonathan left the table in a rage. He did not eat a bite on the second day of the New Moon festival, for he was grieving over David and his father’s insulting words” (1 Sam. 20:34).

— **The** desire **to protect another.** “In the morning Jonathan went outside the city to meet David, as they had agreed, and took a young servant boy with him. When they arrived, Jonathan said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot!" The boy ran, and Jonathan shot an arrow over his head. As the boy was coming toward Jonathan's arrow, Jonathan called out to him, 'The arrow is still farther away! ' Then he called out to the boy, 'Keep running! Hurry, don't delay! Jonathan's servant picked up the arrow and returned to his master. The boy did not suspect anything, for only Jonathan and David knew what the words meant. Jonathan then gave his equipment to his servant and said to him, "Take these to the city" (1 Sam. 20:35-40).

— **Mutually constructive bonds, because they are based on love.** “I pray that they may be united in love and gain courage and attain the richest and deepest knowledge: that they may come to know the mystery of God, Christ” (Col. 2:2).

SOUL BONDS THAT ARE AGAINST GOD'S WILL

— **Formed through casual sexual relationships.** “Dana, Jacob’s daughter, whose mother was Leah, went out to meet the girls of the region. Shechem, the son of Hamor, the ruler of the region, saw Dana, took her, and lay with her by force. But Shechem became attached to Dinah, Jacob's daughter, fell in love with her, and tried to appease her" (Genesis 34:1-3).

— **Work does not bring blessings**. Later, King Jehoshaphat of Judah formed an alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel, even though the latter lived ungodly. They agreed to build ships that would sail to Tarshish.

The ships were built at Ezion-geber. But Eliezer, the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah, prophesied to Jehoshaphat, "Because you have made this alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have built." And the ships were wrecked and could not go to Tarshish (2 Chronicles 20:35-37).

— **It can even be formed by witchcraft.** "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified!" (Gal. 4:17). "These others are zealous to win you over, but their zeal is not genuine. They want to separate you from us so that you will be zealous for them" (Gal. 3:1).

— **Separate** yourselves **from God.** "King Solomon had many foreign wives, whom he loved. In addition to Pharaoh's daughter, he had wives from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and Hittite. They were from the nations about which the Lord had said to the Israelites, 'You shall not go near them, and they shall not come near you. Otherwise, they will turn your hearts away to their gods. Solomon loved these women and was devoted to their gods. He had seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines, and they led his heart astray. In his old age, his wives turned his heart away to other gods, and he was no longer wholehearted toward the Lord his God, as his father David had been (1 Kings 11:1-4).

Bonds of the soul that are contrary to God's will are built on lust, the need to control, witchcraft, and bondage. Evil spirits can be transferred from one person to another through bonds of the soul.

Suggested prayer:

"If evil spirits have entered me through these soul ties, I command them to leave in the name of Jesus and by the power of His innocent blood. I ask you, God, to forgive me for all my wrongdoings. I thank you for wanting to cleanse my heart, set me free, and forgive me

for Jesus' sake.

Thank you for accepting me as I am. I choose to accept myself and my body as cleansed before you. I surrender my whole life to your guidance. I ask you to give me back those areas of my life that the Devil has deceitfully taken from me. I pray this in the name of Christ, amen.

Suggested prayer for someone who has had an abortion:

“Dear God, I confess that I have sinned against your will by agreeing to remove the life of the child growing inside me. It is wrong in your eyes. I humbly ask for your forgiveness. I choose to forgive myself as well. Dear God, take the pain associated with this act from my heart and nail it to the cross at Golgotha. Give me a new heart and a strong spirit. I surrender this child into your caring hands. Thank you for hearing me as I pray in Jesus' name, amen."

Miscarriage:

I myself experienced the death of my first child after he was born. I know firsthand what it feels like when the relationship with your own child is severed before it has even begun.

When a woman discovers she is pregnant, a relationship with her unborn child naturally begins to develop.

At first, the relationship is subconscious. A miscarriage is not just the loss of tissue, it is the unexpected severing of a close relationship. The loss of a child or fetus often causes deep emotional wounds. If left untreated, they can have a subconscious effect later in life.

In prayer, we can bring this undeveloped child to Jesus and also ask for the mother's heart to be healed. God can replace the feelings of loss with His own love and the power of the Holy Spirit for the future.

On dealing with rape:

“Women are raped in Zion, young girls in the towns of Judah” (Rev. 5:11).

> *Three young women came to me. Each of them had two small children. Each of them was on the verge of divorce. Before making their final decision, they came to me without knowing about each other. They had one thing in common: they had been raped as children, which they had forgotten, i.e., pushed into their subconscious without processing it. They could no longer remember anything about their childhood before the age of 12. I prayed for the Holy Spirit's help in revealing to them the cause of their marital difficulties. Painful memories began to surface from their subconscious, and they gradually began to understand their own behavior better...*

Many rape victims suffer from sexual difficulties and are hypersensitive to any kind of touch. Their feelings are tied to the pain they have experienced. The predominant feeling is simply feeling bad, the cause of which is shrouded in mystery. They blame their environment for their bad feelings. A woman who has been raped often feels an unconscious hatred of men and fears all sexual contact. There is a break in her heart that poisons her emotional life and also weakens her body.

Rape is a powerful traumatic experience in its violence. It leaves deep wounds in the emotional life. Rape opens the door in the heart to evil spirits, which begin to influence a person's life without their own choice.

Typical consequences for emotional life include: a weakened ability to trust others, anger, rage, bitterness, shame, guilt, and fears that can torment a person throughout their life

without being addressed. Rape can also be a curse that runs in the family!

> *...I prayed with each woman for God's healing power in their lives. Once they understood the root causes of their difficulties, it was easier for them to continue their family lives. In prayer, we asked God for the strength to forgive the rapist and all other men. This is essential because God's forgiveness is tied to our decision to forgive. Forgiveness is between a person and God...*

Reconciliation with the abuser is rarely successful. The rapist prefers to deny everything. We must also choose to forgive ourselves and accept ourselves, because God accepts us. It is necessary to ask God for forgiveness for bitterness, anger, and other negative feelings that we harbor.

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Heavenly Father, in the holy name of Jesus, I come to You to be freed from all evil spirits that seek to destroy my body, soul, sexuality, and self-esteem. I renounce all feelings of hatred toward men, especially the bitterness and unforgiveness buried in my heart. I renounce all self-blame for this violent experience. I renounce all negative soul ties, the spirit of weakness, and all evil spirits that torment me because of the trauma I have experienced. I renounce all degrees of bondage and emotional locks that prevent me from experiencing a balanced married life. In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of His blood, I command all evil spirits to leave me. Thank you, Jesus, for hearing me. Fill my heart now with Your Holy Spirit. I pray this in the name of my Savior. Amen.*

...every woman I have mentioned is still married to her spouse. One of them had a husband who was a man of God. As his wife healed from her hatred and bitterness, the man quit smoking and drinking and joined his wife in church. God works miracles when we seek His powerful help.

According to statistics, in some parts of the world, one in three girls and one in five boys are abused! That is why it is important to understand how we can help them.

A middle-aged woman came to me. She was experiencing difficulties in her life. She was most troubled by nightmares in which she saw a little girl speaking a foreign language. The girl felt lonely. She often had the same dream. We prayed together that God's Holy Spirit would reveal the cause of the dream. In His mercy, God showed the woman that she had been adopted. She had been brought from Greece as a small child. She suffered from rejection, loneliness, and fears. When this became clear to her, many other things fell into place. She was ready to forgive her biological mother. We asked God to heal the wounds in her heart...

Evil spirits can also bring back painful experiences from the past. This binds people to their traumas. Forgiveness that comes from the heart frees us from the pain we have experienced, even if some memories remain.

It may happen that, despite forgiveness, freedom has not been achieved. Why? It is the work of the enemy of the soul. He should not have the right to torment us with past experiences that seek to prevent us from experiencing the present and

future in a positive way. Therefore, we must clearly renounce the difficult memories and traumas we have experienced.

...A woman who was adopted as a child discussed adoption issues with her adoptive mother and learned about her biological mother. She wanted to meet her mother. After finding her, they experienced the joy of reunion. Since the meeting, the woman's life has become easier in many ways. Her nightmares disappeared, and her quality of life improved. She decided to give her life to Jesus.

Suggested prayer:

"Heavenly Father, I come before You in the name of Your beloved Son, Jesus. I renounce all painful memories that torment me and everything in my past that hinders my life and growth today and in the future. If evil spirits are involved, I command them to leave me and my life in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood. Lord Jesus, come and dwell in my heart and fill me with the Holy Spirit. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus, amen."

REPENTANCE

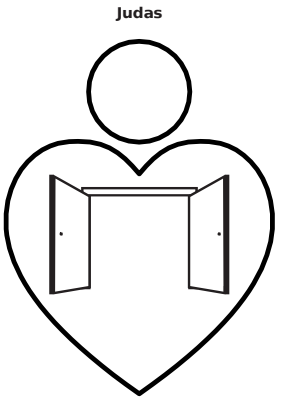
From time to time, people come to me who have fallen into conscious sin, such as adultery, theft, fraud, speaking evil of others, etc. They repent, but after a while, they fall into the same sin again. These people struggle with themselves. Deep in their hearts, there is something unresolved that is waiting to be revealed.

Judas's repentance:

When Judas, Jesus' betrayer, saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, he regretted his action. He took the

thirty pieces of silver he had received back to the chief priests and elders and said, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood

blood." But they replied, "What does that matter to us? That is your concern." Then Judas threw the money into the temple, went away, and hanged himself" (Matt. 27:3-5).



Judas opened the doors of his heart to the devil through greed and unbelief. The devil destroyed his life.

— He regretted the consequences of his actions, but he did not feel heart-wrenching sorrow for his betrayal.

— Unbelief lived in his heart.

— Money was more important to him than Jesus.

— He was a thief: “He (Judas) did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He had charge of the money bag and used to help himself to what was put into it” (John 12:6).

— Judas had not surrendered to Jesus. "They had gathered for a meal, and the Devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, the son of Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Then, as soon as Judas had received it (the piece of bread at the Last Supper), Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly’" (John 13:2, 27).

Judas was blind to the weaknesses of his own character. He lost both his temporal and eternal life. "He (Judas) was one of us and had received a share in the ministry, just as we did. With the reward for his betrayal, he bought a piece of land, but then he fell headlong, his stomach burst open, and his intestines spilled out" (Acts 1:17-18).

Then they all prayed, "Lord, you who know everyone's heart, show us which of these two (Joseph Barnabas or Matthias) you have chosen to take over this ministry and apostolic office, which Judas abandoned to go to his rightful place" (Acts 1:24-25).

Judas did not feel deep sorrow after betraying Jesus. If sin dwells in our hearts, the devil seeks to control us.

Peter's repentance:

“Simon, Simon! Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, “Lord, with you I am ready to go even to prison or to death.” But Jesus replied, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times” (Luke 22:31-34).

These verses indicate that Jesus predicted Peter would deny him. Peter disagreed. Peter did not know himself, but thought he was stronger.

The same chapter describes the situation in which Jesus' prediction of Peter's reaction came true.

"They seized Jesus and took him to the high priest's house. Peter followed at a distance. A fire was lit in the middle of the courtyard, and when the crowd gathered around it, Peter sat down among them. A servant girl saw him sitting by the fire, looked at him for a long time, and said, 'You were with that man too.' Peter denied it, saying, 'I don't even know him. A little later, another man saw him and said, "You are one of them too." But Peter replied, "You are mistaken, I am not." An hour later, another man claimed, "Surely he was with that man, for he is also a Galilean." But Peter said, "I don't know what you're talking about." Just as he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered what the Lord had said to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." He went outside and wept bitterly (Luke 22:54-62).

Peter was disappointed in himself and realized his weakness. He humbled himself and repented of his denial.

After his resurrection, Jesus met his beloved disciple. Jesus asked Peter the same question three times: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” (John 21:15). The disciple answered each question with almost the same words: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus' forgiving attitude toward Peter and the questions he asked began to heal the disciple's wounds.

After hearing Peter's threefold declaration of love for his Master, he gave him three tasks: "Feed my lambs." "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17). "Then he (Jesus) said (to Peter), 'Follow me. (John 21:19).

Genuine repentance requires open honesty about our sins and a deep sense of sorrow because we have offended God with our actions. We must take responsibility for our behavior and be willing to change our ways. Repentance is more than just feeling sorry.

SIMPLE REPENTANCE

— A person wishes they had done something better.

— Feeling sorry for what they did.

— They are hurt by the shame, loss of reputation, fear, etc. that followed their actions.

Signs of deep remorse:

- taking full responsibility for one's own behavior
- no excuses
- willingness to make a complete turnaround

Deep repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It changes the direction of our lives and frees us from the chains of the evil spirit. "If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

“I am glad now—not because you were made sorrowful, but because your sorrow led you to change your minds. Your

sorrow was according to the will of God,

and so we did not harm you. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Cor. 7:9-10). "I acknowledge my transgression; I am sorry for my sin" (Ps. 19:10).

"I acknowledge my transgressions; I am sorrowful for my sins" (Ps.
38:19).

RETURN TO GOD

— **Repentance**. Ask God for forgiveness for the sins that the Holy Spirit has shown you.

— **Forgiveness.** Choose to forgive everyone who has hurt you.

— **Renunciation.** Renounce your conscious sinful behavior and the practice of sin.

The difference between repentance and renunciation:

— When we repent, we admit that we have done wrong. We acknowledge our actions, words, and thoughts as sin and ask God for forgiveness. Deep repentance changes the direction of our lives toward God. (cf. Ps. 51).

— Renunciation takes us further. We decide to stop certain habits or activities and reject them. We declare our previous decisions or promises null and void. When we renounce, for example, occult practices or other sinful habits, wrong attitudes, and values, we decide to reclaim the areas of our lives that we have lost to the devil.

Often we have been deceived without realizing it. When the Holy Spirit reveals distortions in our lives through prayer and Bible study, we begin to be freed internally. "We have renounced all deceitfulness, we do not act deceitfully, we do not distort the word of God, but we bring forth the truth and hope that everyone will evaluate us in their conscience before God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

How have you learned to repent of your mistakes and evil deeds?

THE POWER OF FASTING AND PRAYER

— When fasting to emphasize prayer for something important, it should be done with a humble heart.

“The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, cheats, adulterers—or even like that tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get' (Luke 18:11-12). The Pharisee did fast, but he made it a source of pride. He felt superior to others because of his own deeds. God could not use him as an instrument of His grace.

— Jesus recommended fasting combined with prayer.

“This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21). Some evil spirits are so defiant and proud that getting rid of them requires fasting and concentrated prayer. God has given believers in Christ the authority and power of the Holy Spirit to fight against evil spirits.

— Isaiah tells how true fasting “breaks the yoke and sets free those oppressed by the Devil.”

“Why don't you notice how we fast? Don't you see how we discipline ourselves? I see it! Even on a day of fasting, you pursue your own interests, you oppress those who work for you. Your fasting causes strife and bitterness, violent blows. You no longer fast in a way that carries your prayers to heaven. Is this the fast I expect from you, a day of self-discipline? Is it to bow your head like a reed, to dress in sackcloth, to lie in the dust? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? (Isaiah 58:3-5).

“I am waiting for a different kind of fasting: that you free the innocent from their chains, break the chains of oppression, and free the oppressed, that you may crush all oppression, break the yoke of the hungry, open your home to the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, and not shun your brother in need. Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord

will be your rear guard. And the Lord will

when you call on him, when you cry for help, he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke of oppression from among you and stop pointing fingers and speaking evil, if you give your own to the hungry and feed those who are in need, then light will dawn in your darkness, and the shadow of night will turn into the brightness of noon. And the Lord will always guide you. Even in the heat of the desert, he will revive your strength and strengthen your limbs. You will be like a lush garden, like a spring whose waters never fail" (Isaiah 58:6-11).

The enemy wants us to not act according to God's will. His goal is to increase our worries, sorrows, and pains in order to trap as many people as possible in his nets. Evil spirits oppose God and Christians by any means necessary. Our faith is being tested, but let us continue to pray and fast so that we may experience new victories over our enemy.

— In some cases, we must fast for several days and pray before we are strengthened in our faith and boldly dare to use the authority Jesus has given us to command evil spirits to leave.

Jesus also fasted for 40 days before beginning his ministry. "Jesus left the Jordan filled with the Holy Spirit. Led by the Spirit, he went into the wilderness for forty days, and the Devil tempted him. He ate nothing during those days, and when the time was over, he was hungry" (Luke 4:1-2).

— Paul also fasted. "I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked" (2 Corinthians 11:27).

"(Paul and Barnabas) encouraged the disciples and urged them to remain faithful. They said, 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. ' They appointed elders for each church and, after praying and fasting, entrusted the disciples to the Lord, in whom they now believed" (Acts 14:22-23).

— Chapter 9 of the Book of Daniel tells of Daniel's fasting,

prayer, and confession of the sins of the whole nation.

— Esther 4:3, 15-16 tells how fasting and prayer saved the entire nation.

"In every province where the king's command and decree reached, the Jews mourned as is customary for the dead, fasting and weeping, and most of them slept on sackcloth spread on the ground. Esther instructed Mordecai to respond: "Gather all the Jews in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink anything for three days and three nights. I will fast in the same way with my maids, and then I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. If I must die, I will die."

— 2. The chronicle tells how an overwhelming enemy was defeated by fasting and prayer.

“Frightened, Jehoshaphat turned to the Lord and proclaimed a fast for all Judah. He said, ‘Listen, all you people of Judah and Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat! This is what the Lord says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. Early the next morning, they set out for the wilderness of Tekoa. As they were leaving, Jehoshaphat stepped forward and said, 'Listen to me, people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Trust in the Lord your God, and no one will be able to defeat you. Trust in his prophets, and you will be successful." After consulting with the people, he placed singers in front of the armed forces, who, dressed in holy garments, sang praises to the Lord: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his mercy endures forever!" At that moment, as the singers began to praise the Lord with shouts of joy, the Lord sent an ambush against the Ammonites, Moabites, and men of Mount Seir who were attacking Judah. All of them were defeated” (2 Chronicles 20:3, 15, 20-22).

— Fasting weakens the power of our fleshly nature.

I have often told you, and now I say with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame, and they set their minds on earthly things. But we are citizens of heaven, and from heaven we await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform our lowly body

into a body like his own glorious body, by the power with which he is able to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3:18-21).

— The Book of Nehemiah also tells of the power of fasting and prayer. The king changed his mind and gave permission for the rebuilding.

When I heard this, I sat on the ground for many days, weeping and lamenting and fasting. I prayed to the God of heaven: "Lord, God of heaven, you are great and awesome! You keep your covenant and are faithful to those who love you and obey your commands. Open your eyes to see and your ears to hear the prayer of your servant! Day and night I pray for your servants, the people of Israel, and I confess the sins we have committed against you. I and my family have also sinned. We have greatly sinned against you, for we have not obeyed the laws, commands, and regulations that you gave to your servant Moses" (Neh. 1:4-7).

— The Book of Joel tells of the consequences of fasting and prayer throughout nature.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, proclaim a holy fast, call a solemn assembly! Then the Lord's love was kindled, he had compassion on his people and his land. The Lord responds to his own: "I will give you grain, wine, and oil, so that you may be satisfied. I will no longer let you be mocked by foreign nations. I will drive away the enemies who came from the north. I will scatter them into a dry and desolate land, pushing the vanguard to the eastern sea and the rearguard to the western sea. The stench of their corpses will rise, the smell of decay will spread. They have been arrogant in their deeds! Do not be afraid, O fields, rejoice and be glad! The Lord will do great things. Do not be afraid, animals of the forest! The deserted pastures will become green again, the trees will bear fruit, the fig tree and the vine will yield a rich harvest. Children of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the Lord, your God! In his goodness, he will again give you rain, send showers in season, and give you autumn rains and spring rains as before. Then the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will

overflow with oil and wine. I will repay you for the years that the locusts and their larvae, the grasshoppers and the caterpillars, that great army I sent against you, have eaten. You will eat and be satisfied, and you will praise the Lord your God, who has done

wonderful deeds for you. My people will never again be mocked" (Joel 2:15, 18-26).

— Fasting protects us and our children from enemy attacks.

“On the banks of the Ahava River, I ordered a fast and urged everyone to humble themselves before God and pray that we would arrive safely with our children, livestock, and possessions. On the twelfth day of the first month, we set out from the Ahava River on our journey to Jerusalem. Our God protected us from enemies and ambushes” (Ezra 8:21, 31).

If you are in trouble, pray and fast humbly before God, confess and repent of your sins. Wait and see how God responds to you! Believe firmly and patiently in His help. In His own time and way, He will intervene in your affairs. He will help, support, comfort, strengthen, and bless you with all the blessings of heaven that you are able to receive.

MIND RENEWAL/REPROGRAMMING

According to the Bible, a born-again person receives a new heart and a new spirit. See Ezekiel 36:26-27. The basic direction of life changes.

However, our soul, which includes our physical being, our mind, our will, and our emotions, does not change on its own. The renewal of our mind is a continuous process.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

This is the key that, when used, gradually brings the different areas of our lives into harmony with God's will. What remains for us is the difficulty of surrendering to God and giving everything to him.

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

Our thoughts, feelings, and prayers are largely based on our childhood experiences. Our unconscious mind is a programming center that sends signals to our conscious mind in different situations. The subconscious does not force us to think in a certain way. Its power is based on habits and patterns developed in the past. We do not process information only on a conscious level, but we react to it based on our own programming.

“Many speak before they think” (Proverbs 29:20).

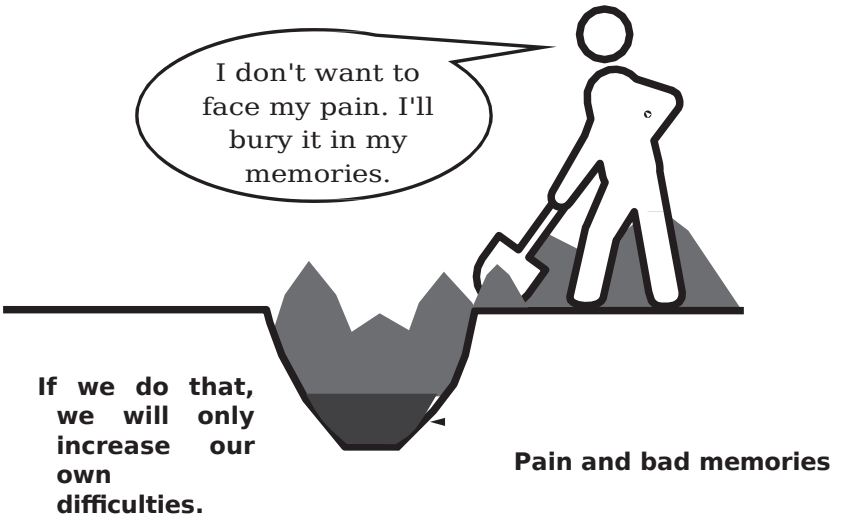
Programming also affects our lifestyles.

A couple with three children came to see me. The middle child had a developmental disability that required demanding care. Liisa's father abandoned her mother because she refused to have an abortion when she was expecting twins. The family already had two children. The father left his family. The mother was left as a single parent of four children.

Liisa missed her father. At the age of 18, she married a man 16 years her senior. Liisa's mother had set an example of serving others at home. Liisa had also sacrificed everything for her family. Now she was completely exhausted.

Liisa's husband Markku was the oldest of three sons. Markku lost his sick father when he was 12 years old. His family did not talk about his father's death, and the grieving process was never completed. As the oldest child, Markku took on the role of man of the family. His family's model was emotional silence. Everything was suppressed and pushed into the subconscious.

When Markku's own family had a disabled child, he escaped from reality. When Liisa wanted to share her feelings with her husband, Markku was silent.


I don't want to face my pain. I'll bury it in my memories.
If we do that, we will only increase our own difficulties.
Pain and bad memories

Liisa suggested that Markku seek outside help for his emotional poverty. Markku refused. He snapped, "I don't need anyone's help!" Now he had two masks. The third mask was pulled over the others: the "I'm better than you" attitude. Liisa put all her energy into her family. Markku tried to control her and blamed Liisa for even the smallest things. He even insulted his wife and spent his time watching television. The pain Markku experienced paralyzed him and his interest in life faded. He just wanted peace and was depressed.

All the feelings he had experienced and pushed into his subconscious had to be dealt with one by one and given to God to heal.

Liisa had reached the end of her tether. She was ready for a divorce. Markku was on the verge of a nervous breakdown when he heard about Liisa's intentions. He felt helpless. That's when he came to me for support and help. Facing himself was perhaps the most difficult task of Markku's life. As we prayed, God began to reveal to Markku his behavior toward his family. "You, Lord, are my

lamp. You bring light to my darkness" (2 Sam. 22:29).

Markku cried and repented of his attitude toward his wife and his whole family. We talked about the prodigal son who returned home after facing the harsh realities of life. “In his hunger, he would have liked to eat the pods that the pigs were eating, but even those were not given to him. Then the son came to his senses and thought, ‘My father’s hired servants have food to spare, but here I am starving to death’” (Luke 15:16-17).

Markku's masks were actually his idols, which he unknowingly served. "Some were foolish, sinning and suffering for their deeds" (Ps. 107:17). Markku decided to pray daily for God to enlighten him about his mistakes. He was ready to confess, repent, and ask for forgiveness. Changing attitudes and values requires deep repentance. God has promised to help. Prayer support is often necessary.

Liisa had not been able to set boundaries for her family. She allowed her husband’s disrespectful behavior to go too far. Liisa wanted to forgive Markku, even though her trust had been severely broken.

“Do not deceive yourselves! God will not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7).

Today, Markku has made a complete turnaround in his life and given his whole life to Jesus. He has found work and begun to take care of his family, children, and everything else. Their marriage is very strong, and they are happy together and serve God together.

This was an example of programming received as a child. Through it, the enemy of the soul sought to gain control over both spouses without them realizing it.

OUR WORD

“If your own words have ensnared you, your promises have trapped you” (Proverbs 6:2).

“The most precious treasure is measured speech” (Proverbs 20:15). “A man’s own mouth is his ruin, and his own words are a snare to him” (Proverbs 18:7).

“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity among our members, defiling the whole body and setting on fire the course of our life, and it is set on fire by hell” (James 3:6).

We can influence how our minds are programmed. Our words have great power over us. If we verbally underestimate ourselves, our self-esteem crumbles. We need to listen to our own words to understand how we are programming ourselves. When we repeat things, they form thought patterns. It is easy for us to take a negative attitude toward our environment when, for example, the media feeds it to us every day. Negative thinking and speech are not in accordance with God's mind.

WORDS WE HEAR

"A malicious insult strikes a deep wound, cutting to the heart" (Proverbs 20:30). "An insulting word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). "A deceitful word breaks the spirit" (Proverbs 15:4).

The years from birth to age 7 are vital for our future. During their early years, children are passive recipients. Their parents’ attitudes, values, and examples sink deep into their subconscious. What parents say is probably true because they represent security for the child. If we were harshly criticized as children, even invalidated, we probably believed it. Our identity has not been able to grow intact.

Even adults can deeply hurt others with their words. “A thoughtless word is like a sword thrust” (Proverbs 12:18). When we experience hurtful words, we easily blame ourselves for what others say!

OUR OLD HABITS

Stress, worries, anger, fear, anxiety, etc. can become binding programming and response patterns in our lives. Various

addictions are programmed into our subconscious. Even if an addicted person knows the dangers of their addiction(s)

, breaking free can be a difficult process. Addictions tend to enslave our minds. It is rare to break free from strong addictions without God's help.

In this sinful world, even many born-again Christians carry guilt, shame, and self-condemnation in their hearts, even though God has forgiven their sins. Christians often just patch up their pain and try to forget it. It won't go away on its own!

Unless we open our hearts completely, even to our subconscious, to God's healing work, old patterns of thinking, feeling, and behavior will expose us to old habits.

HURTS EXPERIENCED AS A CHILD

Whatever the hurt, it follows the child into adulthood. Physical, psychological, or sexual abuse leaves deep wounds in the mind that take time to heal.

Rejection, betrayal, divorce, the death of a loved one, etc. experienced as an adult take their toll. They can lead to depression, mental illness, and self-destruction, tying our energy to our negative experiences.

Different personality types react in different ways. Some withdraw from social life, while others become aggressive.

> *A woman came to me asking for help because she didn't understand her own reactions. She had a happy marriage. One evening, as she was going to bed, she suddenly bit her husband's hand. She was completely baffled! She apologized to her husband, but it continued to bother her. The wife had been abused as a child, and something in that situation caused her to bite her husband. Our experiences are stored in our cellular memory, where our bodies and subconscious minds have recorded them. When something new reminds us of a previous experience, we react based on that previous experience.*

* * *

Another woman came to me wondering why she always chose violent men. We prayed that God would reveal the root cause of her problem. The Holy Spirit helped her remember that her grandfather had abused her as a child. The pain had been buried in her subconscious, and she no longer remembered it. Her interpretation of her life was: "I am worthless, people can do whatever they want to me!" Even though she had given her life to Christ, this subconscious programming had not disappeared. It drove her into distorted relationships, and she did not understand her own behavior. She was unable to do what she wanted, but did what she hated. "I don't even understand what I do: I don't do what I want, but what I hate. So I no longer do it myself, but the sin that dwells in me does it" (Rom. 7:15, 17).

Because distorted programming from childhood had created a sin that lived in her heart, it subconsciously controlled the woman's choices in relationships. We met a few times, during which we discussed the meaning of God's word and the healing work of the Holy Spirit in repairing the programming of our subconscious. She began to understand herself. After quite a few internal struggles, she was freed from her problem and married a well-behaved man.

* *

A pastor came to me who had played and sung in a rock band when he was young. As an adult, he experienced a spiritual awakening, gave his life to God, and studied to become a pastor. He said, "When I pray alone, rock music starts

playing in my ears, and I can't concentrate on my prayer. This feels strange."

I told him that the rock music he had been programmed with as a young man was still in his subconscious. Now he had begun to serve the living God. Nevertheless, through the programming of his subconscious, the enemy of his soul was able to disturb his prayers.

“We know that the law is spiritual. I, on the other hand, am a corrupt person, sold into slavery to sin. I don’t even understand what I am doing: I don’t do what I want, but what I hate. And if I do what I do not want to do, then I admit that the law is good. So it is no longer I who do what I do, but the sin that dwells in me. I know that there is nothing good in me, that is, in my corrupt nature. I would like to do what is right, but I cannot. I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do. But if I do what I do not want to do, I no longer do it myself, but the sin that dwells in me does it. So I find myself under this law: I want to do what is good, but I cannot get rid of evil. In my heart, I joyfully accept God's law, but in my actions, I see another law at work, one that is contrary to the law in my heart. Thus, I am a prisoner of the law of sin that is at work in my body. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:14-24).

This Bible passage deals precisely with the effects of the subconscious on our lives. It shows that we do not control our own subconscious. It drives us to make choices and reactions that cause disappointment. We are in trouble without God's help.

The subconscious mind taking control of our lives can defeat our thoughts and desires. If you have not forgiven the person who hurt you, when you meet them again, you may subconsciously attack them with your words or leave the scene. This does not change the fact that you have already given your life to God.

The pains, difficulties, poor lifestyles, and distorted programming imprinted on the subconscious are just waiting to manifest themselves in different forms. We are thus

prisoners of our corrupt nature, subject to the law of sin.

As a consolation: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1-2).

in connection with Jesus, has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2).

The healing work of the Holy Spirit reaches into the deepest wounds and pains of our subconscious. He leads us into all truth, including about ourselves.

“The desires of the flesh are death, but the desires of the Spirit are life and peace” (Rom. 8:6).

> *A woman who had been adopted as a child came to me. Her adoptive parents were good to her. After having her first child, the woman began to have nightmares in which her newborn baby was taken away from her. Her subconscious began to unravel her own experience. This felt heavy. I helped the woman to free herself from this burden. The Holy Spirit healed her subconscious pain.*

Perhaps you have experienced deep hurts in your life. Fear, worry, unforgiveness, or self-hatred may dwell within you. Perhaps you have experienced rejection, or addictions are part of your daily life.

Whatever your life experiences may be, they do not have to define or enslave you for the rest of your life. In prayer, you can surrender your burdens to Jesus, who will help you live in inner freedom.

Suggested prayer:

> *“Dear Father in heaven, I confess to you (name your difficulty). I ask forgiveness for my sins and surrender them to you now. You know what in my life is contrary to your will. Show it to me. I am ready to deal with everything that is contrary to your will. I need your help. “Do not rely on your own understanding, but trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5). From this day*

forward, I choose you as the Lord of my life. I thank you for your care, in Jesus' name, amen."

REPROGRAMMING THE MIND

He (Jesus) replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots” (Matthew 15:13).

Without being born again, our spirits have not awakened to understand what God wants from us. We have been programmed by this world, our flesh, and the Devil. Even as believers, the flesh seeks to control us. Unless we continually return to the Word of God, we are under the control of our flesh.

“However, you are not living according to your own nature but under the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9).

The renewal of the mind often begins with the restoration of the image of God.

1. **Restoring the image of God.**

Our understanding of God is shaped by our father and the authority figures close to us. If our experience of our father is very difficult and distorted, then our image of God is also distorted. “God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

The so-called natural man fears God because he fears his punishment and judgment. Many blame God for their illnesses or the death of their loved ones. The more distorted the programming, the more distorted the image of God that has been formed.

God is not responsible for all misfortunes. God is a God of love and wants only good for us, even though he is blamed.

"Let the liars be silenced, those who arrogantly accuse the innocent and despise them with haughty words! How great is your goodness! It is an inexhaustible treasure for those who fear you.

“In the sight of all, you give your help to those who take refuge in you. You shelter them in your mercy, you keep them safe in your dwelling. There, they are safe from the plots of men and the accusations of their tongues” (Ps. 31:19-21).

God tells us about himself in his word. We must allow his word to work in our hearts. Understanding God's love awakens gratitude and praise.

“I sought the Lord, and he answered me. He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant with joy; their faces are never covered with shame” (Ps. 34:5-6).

Praise be to the Lord! He showed me his wonderful kindness when I was trapped. In my distress I said, "I have been torn away from your presence!" And you heard my prayer when I cried out to you for help. Love the Lord, all his servants! The Lord protects his faithful ones, but he punishes those who defy him. Take courage, be strong, all you who hope in the Lord” (Ps. 31:22-25).

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High. It is good to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by evening” (Ps. 92:2-3).

God does not love us because of our goodness, but because he is love. God’s love for us is an undeserved gift. We cannot repay it. We can only give him our lives. He himself directs his work in us. Living with him brings peace and joy to our hearts.

2. **Our position before God.**

Once we have a clearer picture of God, we can focus on examining our position in God's eyes. As recipients of Christ's atoning work, our position has changed.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him (Christ)” (1 John 3:1).

Being children of God gives us many privileges. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“Grace and peace from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth! To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by

his blood" (Revelation 1:5).

“God raised us up with Christ Jesus and gave us a place in heaven” (Ephesians 2:6).

3. **Our identity in Christ.**

God wants to transform us into the image of his Son, to make us new creations. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, is our brother. “The saints and those who are being sanctified all have the same Father, and that is why the saint does not disdain to call them brothers” (Heb. 2:11).

When our spirit is connected to the Spirit of God and His word fills our minds, we receive a new identity. God wants to free us from everything that binds us. His word has the power to cleanse our minds and reprogram them according to His will.

God has ways to heal our hearts, no matter how difficult our situation may be. “He (God) sent forth His word and healed them; He rescued them from the grave” (Ps. 107:20). “For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap” (Mal. 3:2).

When the Devil tries to get into your heart through your old ways of thinking and brings up things you have already dealt with, respond, “My difficulties are now in God’s care,” and command him to leave. You can ask the Lord’s angels to fight against the Devil with you.

God’s promise to us: “Do not be afraid. I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you walk through the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you; when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. I am the Lord your God. I, the Holy One of Israel, am your Savior” (Isaiah 43:1-3).

In this life, we cannot avoid difficulties, but by trusting in God, we can move forward. He is with us, strengthening and helping us. From Him, we receive wisdom, understanding, and strength to live despite our difficulties. As we accept our burdens, God's Holy Spirit wants to give us something new

and beautiful in our hearts.

We can reinforce our reprogramming by reading/speaking aloud and meditating on God's Word. Our new life with God shapes

is built on the choices of our mind and will. This knowledge is liberating. We can choose what we think!

Suggested prayer:

> *"Dear Heavenly Father: "I don't want to conform to this world. I ask for your help in changing my mind. I choose to renew my mind so that I can evaluate how you want me to live. Amen."*

- "I will keep my mind steadfast, trusting in your mercy. Isaiah 26:3
- I thank you, God, for your peace. Protect me from the control of my own flesh. I thank the Holy Spirit for your help, strength, and promise to be with me every day. I want to capture all my thoughts to be obedient to Christ. I ask you to help me to have the mind of Christ in my heart. Phil. 2:5
- I choose to think about what is above with you, not what is below on earth. Col. 3:2
- Father, help me to remember to think about what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable, whatever is good and worthy of praise. Phil. 4:8
- Father, help me to cleanse my mind with water and the Word. Eph. 5:26
- I thank you that you have not given me a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love, and a sound mind.
  and a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1:7
- Thank you for helping me overcome the sins of my thoughts. Thank you for your help in all my ways. I have come to this decision with conviction. I know that I will not be put to shame. Isaiah 50:7
- Thank you, Father, for wanting to give us all this in Jesus' name, I pray, amen. John 15:16.

- Cliff and Kathleen Richards, Healing Prayers, pp. 265-266

6 LIFE'S CHALLENGES

CONFLICTS

Many kinds of conflicts are part of everyday life. Every day we encounter different ideas and expressions of thought that differ from our own. Attitudes, customs, values, models, and ideas vary greatly between cultures.

In my current home country of Australia, there are indigenous people who should not be looked in the eye. When I meet them, we sit side by side without looking at each other. In Western countries, looking someone in the eye is part of the customs. We may get into trouble if we are not familiar with the customs of the country.

We cannot always avoid difficult situations, especially when it comes to relationships that are important to us.

Have you ever felt exhausted when trying to take care of matters concerning your loved ones at home, at work, in your neighborhood, etc.?

“Where do your conflicts and fights come from? They come from your desires, which battle within your bodies. You desire but do not have, so you fight and kill each other, but you still do not have what you want. You fight and quarrel, but you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:1-2).

Some conflicts are misunderstandings. Others are based on distorted attitudes and desires that lead to hurtful words and hurtful behavior. Satisfying our own needs can take God's place in our lives.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t love you anymore.” “It’s okay.”

The Bible testifies that our behavior and reactions are often contrary to God's will. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

“When I (Jesus) am in them and you (God) are in me, they (the disciples) are completely one, and then the world will understand that you sent me and that you have loved them as you have loved me” (John 17:23). Our mutual love as Christians can testify to the world whom we serve. The power of the gospel brings peace to our lives.

“If possible, and as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18).

First, you must make peace with God (vertically), then with your neighbors (horizontally).

If we want to experience the peace that God promises us, we must surrender ourselves completely to him. “Be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

There is little love in the world, and even that is far from God's love. “I (Jesus) have made your (God’s) name known to them, and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them (Christ’s followers), and I in them” (John 17:26).

Outside of God, there is no real and lasting love. The good news of the gospel brings the deepest satisfaction to the heart.

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. In this way, Christ dwells in your hearts through faith, and love is the

foundation and basis of your life. Then, together with all the saints, you will be able to comprehend all the breadth, length,

height and depth, and may you comprehend the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge. So that the fullness of God may dwell in you" (Eph. 3:16-19).

Often we know what we should do, but we are unable to do it. This is the sigh of every true Christian. We cannot do it in our own strength, but God has promised to help us when we ask Him.

Suggested prayer:

> *"Dear God, I know I should let go of my anger. It is destroying me. Unless you help me, free me, and cleanse my heart from its power, I am in trouble."*

God responds to humble requests. He can and wants to soften, heal, change, and free our hearts from the inside out. He promises us a new heart. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

God will give you the strength to treat other people as he does, when:

— You are able to love your enemies.

  "But to you who hear me, I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28).

— You are ready to reconcile with your adversary.

  "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go and be reconciled with your brother. Then come and offer your gift." Matt. 18:15, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." (Matt. 5:23-24).

— Choose from your heart to forgive those who have hurt you.

"If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14–15).

— You are willing to admit your own weaknesses, difficulties, and mistakes.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

WAYS TO RESPOND IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

— **Attack is the best form of defense.** „ It is useless to talk to a fool; he will not understand your wisdom" (Proverbs 23:9). "A conceited man cannot tolerate criticism, and a fool

does not go to the wise" (Proverbs 15:12).

— **Escape.** "A person who isolates himself only looks at himself—a quarrel is ready if you advise him" (Proverbs 18:1). Silence is used to avoid quarrels.

— **Efforts to build peace.** "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (Col. 3:15).

When conflict arises:

— The aggressor focuses on winning, making victory more important than human relationships.

— The one who flees focuses on escape, sometimes denying the whole issue.

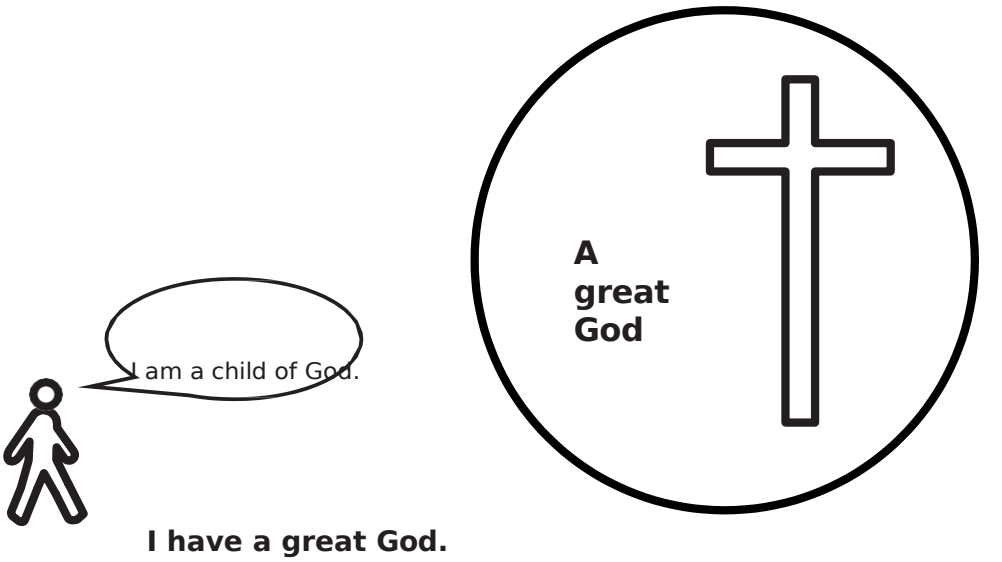
— The peacemaker focuses on achieving reconciliation.

What is your way of reacting and coping in difficult situations?

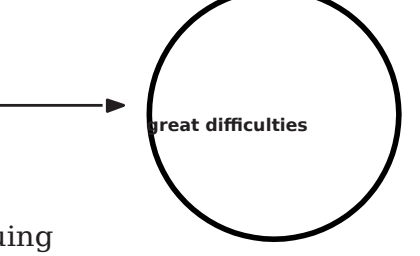
THE FIRST STEP TOWARD RECONCILIATION

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

The purpose of our lives is to bring glory to God! It is worth pausing to consider whether we are bringing glory to God or to something else with our lives. If we focus on something other than God, we will soon find ourselves in internal and external conflicts. If you do not seek God's will at different stages of your life, you are left to your own devices. Either you have a great God or a great ego!



When we encounter conflicts, we must consider whether the matter in



question
worth arguing
about?

"I, who am a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received, always being humble, gentle, and patient. Let love help you get along with each other" (Eph. 4:1-2).

"Above all, keep on loving one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

"Wisdom makes a man patient, and honor is given to him who overlooks an offense" (Prov. 19:11).

"Gentleness is more valuable than heroism, and patience is more valuable than conquering a city" (Proverbs 6:32).

There are few things in life worth fighting tooth and nail for. If we are willing to change our own attitudes or behavior, the other party will automatically change something in their relationship with us.

THE SECOND STEP TO RECONCILIATION

"How can you see the speck in your brother's eye, but not notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite! First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5).

We understand and explain our own behavior, but we easily judge the actions of others.

When we're in conflict with others, the hardest thing is usually to admit our own part in it. The unrest continues until we agree to reflect on our own reactions.

. We humans are quite blind when it comes to ourselves; we prefer to see faults in others.

If we ask God to reveal the reasons behind our reactions, we may be surprised. Something unexplained may be found in the realm of our emotions. God would like us to be humble enough to admit our own distorted feelings and perceptions. He wants to help us dismantle and reshape them. This will strengthen the positive growth of our personality.

“Search me, God, and see my heart. Test me and see my thoughts. See if I am on a slippery path, and guide me on the path of eternity” (Ps. 139:23-24).

God sees us as we are, even if we do not know ourselves very well. He waits to help and forgive us. When we believe this and take responsibility for our own behavior, we can boldly come before God’s throne of grace. He will not reject us! You can ask a trusted person to help you examine yourself.

“Listen to advice and accept discipline, that you may be wise in the future” (Proverbs 19:20).

Denying one's own mistakes, making excuses, and blaming others or circumstances prevent inner growth and renewal.

“The righteous will inherit the land, and the honest will live in it” (Proverbs 2:21).

PARTIAL CONFESSION

A couple came to see me. The man had a black eye. There was palpable tension between them. Neither wanted to back down an inch. The wife was demanding something the husband could not agree to. The wife's anger erupted into a fit of rage. Both were professing Christians.

During our conversation, it became clear that the wife was serving the idol of selfishness. The lady accepted my thoughts and apologized to her husband. She said, "I was wrong on my part, but you were clearly also to blame for this quarrel."

Her confession was accompanied by an accusation that weakened the effectiveness of the clarification!

I prayed again with my wife for God's help. The Holy Spirit touched her heart. Crying, she asked her husband for forgiveness. He was also ready to apologize for his part. A miracle happened, and they returned home in harmony.

Sometimes our apologies include downplaying our own part in the matter. It is difficult to admit that we are selfish and want to be right.

As children, we are taught to apologize for our wrongdoings. As we grow up, we learn that simply saying "I'm sorry if I hurt you," "I'm sorry," or "Let's forget about it" is not enough. Saying this is right, but heartfelt repentance is something else. These expressions rarely build mutual reconciliation. They can backfire. How might the other party interpret these statements? For example "You were actually the one at fault." These words do not take responsibility for one's own behavior but shift the blame onto the other person.

A couple visited me whose husband was unable to control his words. He carelessly said hurtful things to his wife. When this came up during the conversation, the man said, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" He did not take responsibility for his words or behavior. No agreement was reached between them that time!

“If you want to make peace and find reconciliation with others, humility and acknowledging your own part in the matter are necessary. First, you must remove the plank from your own eye. “How can you see the speck in your brother’s eye, but not notice the plank in your own eye?” (Matt. 7:3).

- Meet with the other party/all parties. Begin by confessing your actions to all those involved and to God. Every wrong word or deed hurts them. Sins committed in the heart do not affect others. They are confessed directly to God. If other people were present, the matter should be confessed to all who were present. The confession should extend as far as the offense.
- Avoid words such as "if," "but," "maybe," and "possibly." They water down the apology and shift the blame to the other party, diminishing the apologizer's contribution and defending their own behavior. "I'm sorry if I upset you. Maybe I was wrong, or maybe you could have reacted differently. Maybe I should have listened to your whole point first. I was tired and lost my temper." This kind of apology does not relieve the other party's tension or soften their hurt feelings. The word "but" has the power to undo everything that has been said before it. "I'm sorry I hurt you, but you annoyed me." "I know I was wrong, but so were you." The listener registers the words that come after "but" more clearly than those that came before it.
- Specify your own share of responsibility. The more detailed you are in acknowledging your mistakes and weaknesses, the more likely the other party will be willing to reconcile. When you analyze your own share of responsibility, you also help to realize the need for change in your own behavior, words, and attitudes.
- Admit that you have hurt the other person. If you want your apology to be well received, openly admit the hurt you have caused. Try to show that you understand how the offended party feels. "You must have felt bad when I said that to you in front of everyone." Or "I'm sorry I did that to you." If you are not sure how the other person feels, you can ask them. Your assumptions about the impact of your words or actions may not necessarily correspond to reality. "Did I realize how much I hurt you?"
- Accept the consequences of the offense. Accept any punishment that may follow your offense. This shows genuine remorse. You may have to compensate for the damage you have caused in some way. The more openly you try to put things right, the easier it will be to restore trust and harmony.
- Change your behavior. You are not truly sorry unless you are willing to change something in your own behavior. Genuine repentance also includes communicating the need for change. With God's grace, real change can happen. Sometimes it may be necessary to plan for change in writing.

- Apologize (give the person you hurt some time). When you go through these steps with the person you hurt, they will usually be willing to forgive you and move forward in peace. If the person to whom you confess your transgression does not respond, you can ask, "Please, will you forgive me?" You may have to wait for an answer! For some people, it may take time to respond. Reconciliation does not always happen instantly. Do not add pressure to the situation. If the other person is not ready to forgive, make sure you have confessed everything on your part. You can try to support them: "I know I hurt you, and I understand that forgiveness is not easy. However, I hope that we can find reconciliation and that you can forgive me for my words, actions, and behavior. I am willing to pray for you and will do my best to repair the damage I have caused between us. I ask God to help me correct my mistakes. Please tell me what I can do to repair our relationship." This attitude usually leads to the best outcome. A close relationship can be healed by admitting your mistakes and working with God's help to correct them. The "golden rule" applies here as well: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). Other people treat us the way we treat them. If we blame others, we will be blamed in return.

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). By confessing your wrongdoing to another person, you are serving them, not primarily seeking comfort for yourself. Ask God for the ability to love others as He does. Regardless of the other person's reaction, make amends for the harm you have caused and decide to change your behavior. This will increase the likelihood of reconciliation and peace. Through this process, you will also learn to support others in similar situations. - Ken Sande, Kevin Johnson, Resolving everyday conflict, pp. 63-69.

Two long-time friends came to me. They had a deep disagreement that they couldn't resolve between themselves. We talked and prayed for God's help in the situation. The offended party was very hurt by the argument. However, he chose to forgive his friend, but his trust had been severely damaged. He did not want to continue the friendship. Forgiveness is between me and God, but reconciliation is between two people. Even

with the best intentions, it does not always work out.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:1).

The Bible advises that sometimes we must confront the faults and weaknesses of others. We are urged to do so tactfully. If someone has done something against you, God's advice is to go to them and bring up the matter.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go and be reconciled with your brother first. Then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23-24).

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother” (Matt. 18:15).

If the offender repents so much that he, for example, starts drinking or is self-destructive, you must try to help him. Respecting God also means respecting your own life and the lives of others. Every Christian can be an example in this.

HOW DO WE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE?

The best way is to meet face to face. The most important thing in a meeting is to listen to the other person. Your own preconceptions may be wrong. You should not judge the other person's behavior until they have expressed their own opinion. Even if you do not agree with it, listen carefully and try to understand their point of view. I know from experience that listening is a skill that must be learned.

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (James 1:19).

When you encounter someone in a difficult situation, think carefully about how you approach them, what you are going to say, and how you are going to say it. Also, accept that your own opinion may be questioned.

“For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit” (1 Peter 3:10). Sometimes it is good to bring a third person into the conversation.

“But if he does not listen to you, take one or two others

along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses’” (Matthew 18:16). The situation can get out of hand if we approach things in a harsh manner. Then the other person’s pain will remain unaddressed.

"Do not lord it over those entrusted to you, but be examples to your flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). If we want to be peacemakers in our environment, we need God's help. We cannot cope with difficult situations with our own wisdom.

"Finally, all of you, be of one mind, have compassion for one another, love one another, be kind and humble" (1 Peter 3:8).

"Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, for you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be kind to all, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:23-25).

An introverted man who had been rejected by his mother came to me. He found it difficult to maintain a close relationship with his wife. He was demanding, and his wife was unable to fulfill all his desires. Another woman caught his eye and seduced him. The man was unable to resist because the situation served his childhood need for approval that had gone unfulfilled.

When the matter was revealed to the leader of his congregation, he was expelled from the church. This brought the experiences of rejection from his subconscious to the surface. The man just cried in front of me. We talked about his life so that I could get a clearer picture of his problems.

He had asked God and his wife for forgiveness for his behavior. The hardest thing for him was to forgive himself. I asked him, "Do you believe that God has forgiven you?" He said he believed so, because that is what the Bible

says. "If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

I asked him again, "Has your wife forgiven you?" He said that they had worked things out. His wife said that she had not understood the abandonment and loneliness her husband had experienced in his childhood.

Then I asked, "What right do you have not to forgive yourself, since God has forgiven you?" He admitted that he had no such right. Finally, he was ready to choose forgiveness for himself, for the woman who had seduced him, and for his own mother. He also forgave the leaders of his church who had not understood his background.

We prayed to God to heal the wounds in his heart and fill him with the Holy Spirit. Their mutual love grew and strengthened after this difficult period in their lives. The man felt a need to help other men in their difficulties.

The difficulties in our lives are opportunities for growth. Through them, God teaches us to see and understand others who are suffering. It is always best to sort out your own issues first.

SORTING OUT YOUR EMOTIONAL LIFE

INSECURE/UNBALANCED EMOTIONAL LIFE

The Bible gives a good example of such a person. "There was no man in all Israel as handsome as Absalom. From the sole of his foot to the head, there was no blemish in him" (2 Sam. 14:25).

"Absalom got himself chariots and horses, and a retinue of fifty men. He used to sit early in the morning at the gate of the city, and whenever anyone came to the king to seek justice in a

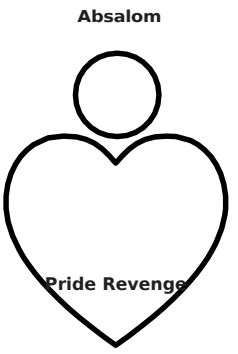
dispute, Absalom would call him over and ask, 'Where are you from?

When the man told him which tribe of Israel he was from, Absalom said, "Your case is just, but no one will listen to you before the king." And he continued, "I wish I were appointed judge in this land! Then everyone who has a dispute or a legal case could come to me, and I would do what is right for them." Whenever someone approached to throw himself down before him, he would hurry to lift him up from the ground and kiss him. Absalom did this to all the Israelites who came to the king to seek justice. In this way, he won the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

The verses above describe well the pride and lust for power in Absalom's heart.

"Then he called Joab to him to send him with a message to the king, but Joab did not want to come. He called Joab again, but Joab still refused to come. Then he said to his servants, 'You know that Joab has a field next to mine, where he has planted barley. Go and set it on fire.' So Absalom's servants set the field on fire" (2 Sam. 14:29-30). Absalom was also vengeful.

"He had secretly sent messengers to all the tribes of Israel, saying, 'When you hear the sound of the trumpet, shout, "Absalom has been proclaimed king in Hebron!"'" (2 Sam. 15:10). This verse reveals Absalom's treachery.



Absalom's heart was filled with pride, lust for power, vengeance, and deceit. "Where there is pride, there is shame" (Proverbs 11:2).

"Then David said to all his men who were with him in Jerusalem, 'Come, let us flee, or we will not escape from Absalom. Hurry, or he will overtake us. Then we will be destroyed, and he will destroy the whole city with the sword" (2 Sam. 15:14).

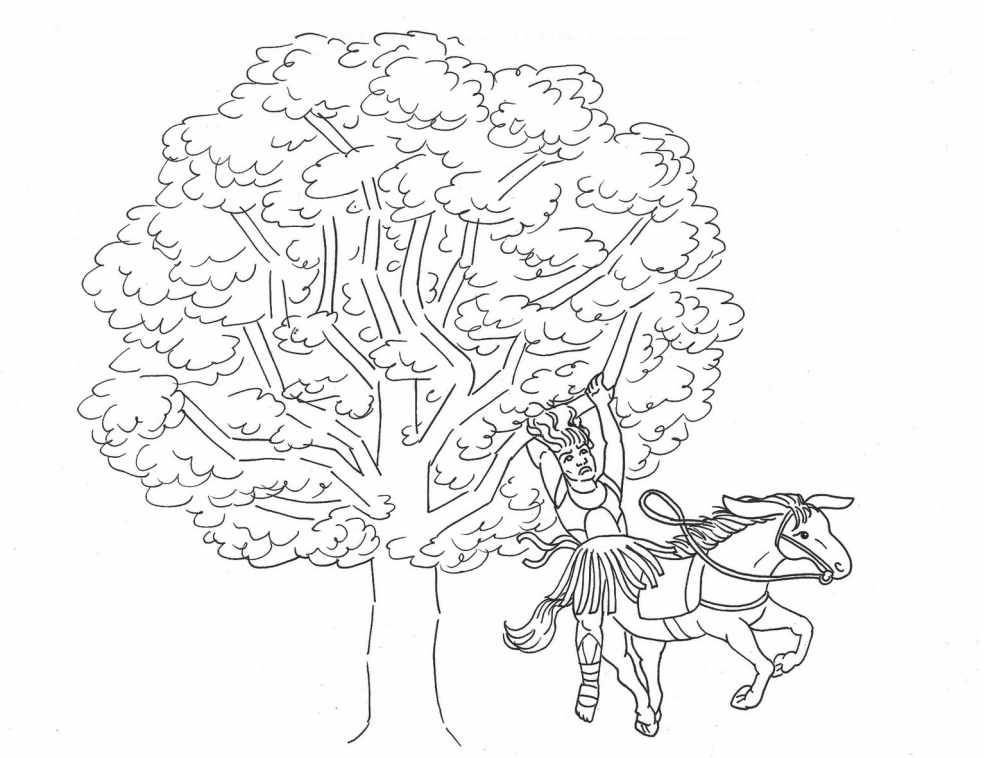
Absalom was arrogant and tried to seize power from his father. "A tent was set up for Absalom on the roof, and he went in before his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (2 Sam. 16:22).

Absalom was a shameless man. Absalom's attitudes and choices only caused problems for himself.

“Absalom, riding on a mule, came face to face with David’s men. When the mule came under a large, dense oak tree, Absalom got caught in the tree and was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule went on its way” (2 Sam. 18:9).

“Joab said, ‘I will not waste any more time with you. ’ He took three javelins and thrust them into Absalom’s chest while he was still hanging in the oak tree” (2 Sam. 18:4).

Absalom's fate was harsh. He did not allow God to guide his life, but took it into his own hands.



Absalom’s life is a lesson for us. “If we examined ourselves, we would not be judged” (2 Cor. 11:31).

Do you stop to reflect on your emotional reactions, thoughts, attitudes, and behavior patterns in your daily life?

Examine yourself to see where you are right now.

I don't know myself	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	I know myself

As Christians, it is good to know ourselves in order to avoid self-deception. It is necessary to listen to our own thoughts and ask ourselves questions: "Do I dwell on things that are pleasing to God? Does the one I love most hear my decisions?" “You are clearly a letter from Christ, written by him and delivered through us. This letter is not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3).

Characteristics of an insecure/emotionally unstable person:

— They seem well-balanced. Their lives appear to be in order. They consider themselves to be good and reliable people. When a situation arises in which their mask begins to crack or fall away, they become enraged or flee.

Self-examination:

I do not admit my weaknesses/sins	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	I admit my weaknesses and sins

Do you try to hide certain areas of your life from other people?

I spoke with a kind-hearted woman who was always helping others, but who lacked judgment. She met a pleasant homeless man. After hearing his story, the woman's heart softened and she took him in to live with her. At first, the man seemed nice. Gradually, the

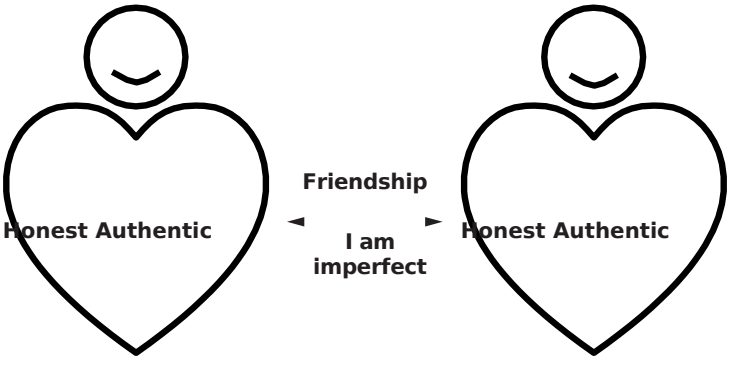
situation began to escalate. If things did not go his way

, he became enraged. The man took the woman's money and, in a fit of rage, broke her belongings. Finally, the woman called the police and the man was taken away. He was a criminal whose heart was controlled by evil spirits. They had also transferred to the woman. The man was sent to prison for his actions because he was wanted by the police.

The woman lacked discernment and judgment. If you want safe and balanced people around you, the help of the Holy Spirit is invaluable. I helped the woman forgive her husband. He confessed and repented of his sins, especially his disregard for the warnings of the Holy Spirit. We prayed to God to free him from all evil spirits and heal the wounds in his heart.

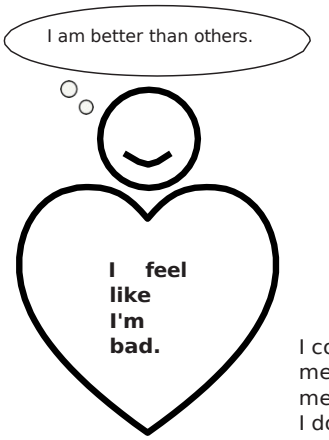
Balanced people admit their mistakes, weaknesses, and sins. They are trustworthy, open, and honest with themselves and others. “To whom much is entrusted, much will be required” (1 Cor. 4:2).

Closeness also involves openness about one's own weaknesses. If we are unable to do this, our close relationships will not deepen but will remain stagnant. In the long run, this will not satisfy either party. A true connection is an emotional connection.



We connect with the heart through emotional connection.

— Insecure people send indirect/ambiguous messages. Their feelings and thoughts are in conflict with each other.

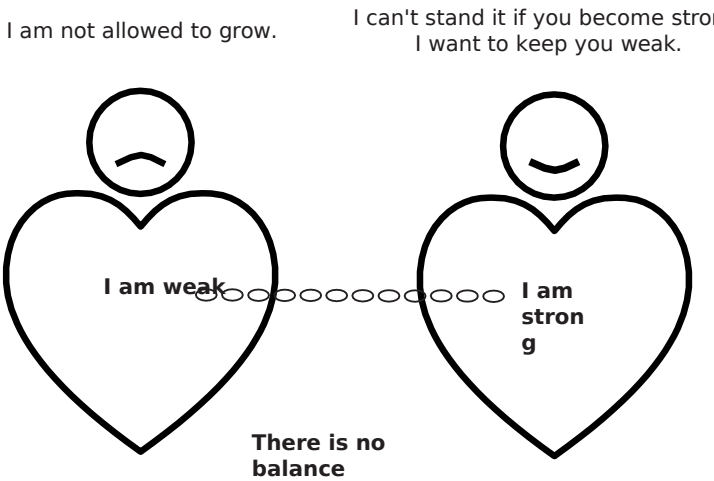


I constantly send indirect messages to those around me: "I am better than you. I don't need other people."

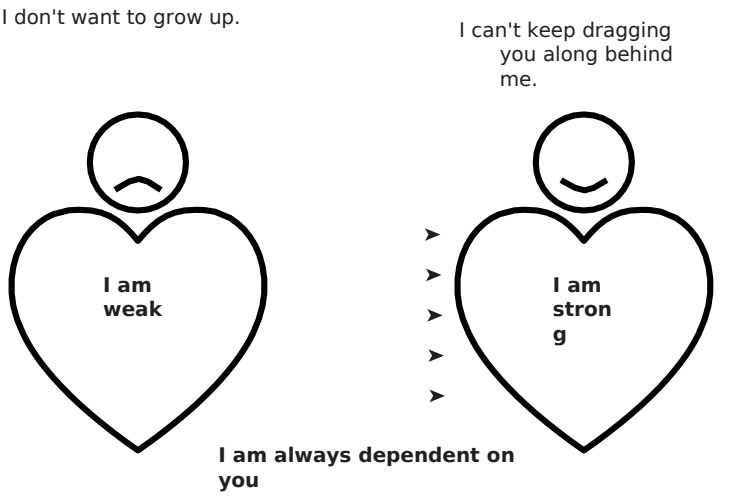
An unbalanced person:

— Believes the Devil's lie: "You are inadequate, bad." This feeling is often hidden behind a mask of pride.

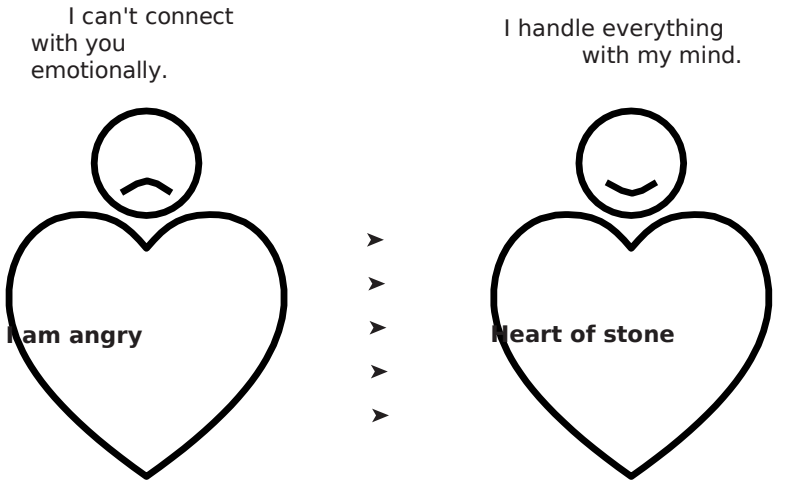
— Feels weaker than they really are. It is difficult for them to create a balanced close relationship because the other party begins to dominate.



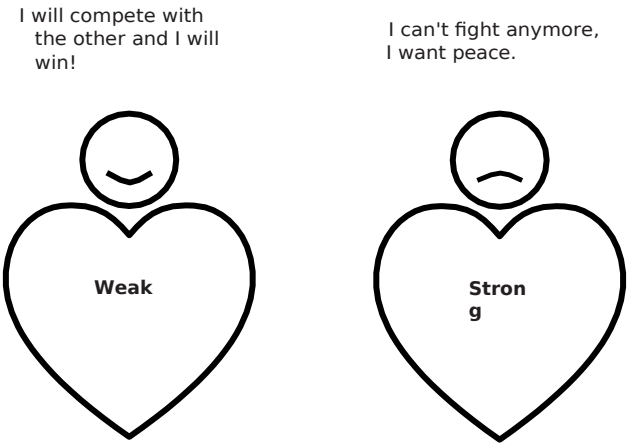
— Feels dependent on someone stronger. This can lead to codependency.



— In a relationship, one partner may develop anger toward the whole relationship if the stronger partner hides their true self behind a mask. An emotional connection cannot develop.



— Mutual competition may occur. The weaker one starts fighting to switch roles.

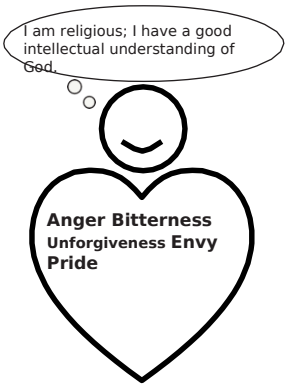


No emotional connection is formed, both suffer

For our mental and spiritual growth, it is important to learn to acknowledge our own mistakes and weaknesses, rather than looking for them in others. “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

If we believe that we don't need anything, we are deceiving ourselves. Everyone needs others and God.

— Insecure or unbalanced people are often religious rather than spiritual.



Their hearts are unclear, and there is no room for the Holy Spirit.

“Dear friends! Since we have received such promises, we must cleanse ourselves from all impurity of body and spirit and, in reverence for God, consecrate our lives completely to him. Make room for us in your hearts!” (2 Cor. 7:1-2).

Religious people are respected for their strengths. Their faith is based on rational reflections on God. They will not grow spiritually unless God's grace softens their hearts. They lack the power of the gospel, which prevents them from developing true humanity.

> "Many think their own way is right, even though it is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

14:12).

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel! Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, clean the cup first from the inside, otherwise it will not be clean on the outside either. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs! Outwardly they are beautiful, but inside they are full of dead bones and all kinds of filth. In the same way, you are pious on the outside, in the eyes of men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (Matt. 23:23-28).

— The insecure have lost touch with their own vulnerability, their pain, their sinfulness, and their need for intimacy.

> "Search me, God, and see my heart. Test me and see my thoughts. See if I am on a strange, wrong path, and guide me on the path of eternity" (Ps. 139:23-24).

In my work, I have encountered many insecure people. Almost all of them have buried their pain in their subconscious. They wonder why the gospel does not work in their lives. They themselves have not been able to break free from their chains: their anger, jealousy, unforgiveness, addictions, etc. They may have prayed and fasted, but nothing has happened because their hearts have not been cleared. That is why the Bible advises us:

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Feel your misery, mourn

and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:8-10).

Our part is to repent, do penance, and turn to God with all our hearts. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

This is necessary because Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

My reader, ask God to show you any barriers that may exist between you and Him.

Secure and balanced people give others room to grow because they are capable of loving unconditionally. They themselves are ready to grow as individuals as they learn to know God's mercy more deeply.

“Wisdom is strength, and experience brings power. Do not be angry with evildoers, do not envy the wicked, for the wicked have no future, and the lamp of the wicked will be extinguished” (Proverbs 24:5, 19-20).

— Immature people defend and explain their own behavior. They do not accept feedback.

  “A conceited man does not accept criticism, and a proud man does not go to the wise” (Proverbs 15:12).

— Immature people blame others for their own behavior and do not take responsibility for themselves. Verbal attacks are typical of them. In disagreements, winning, i.e., being right, is important to them.

Many people addicted to drugs do not take responsibility for their own lives. They explain their addiction as being due to external factors.

Self-defense mechanisms easily arise to protect such a person. Even in the case of a minor disagreement, they may repeat all the grievances that their shared past has brought

them.

A person who does not see their own need to change will not change! The blaming and accusatory attitude will continue. God's help is crucial, in addition to humility and repentance. "If you rebuke a conceited person, they will mock you; if you reprove a wicked person, they will revile you. Do not rebuke a conceited person, for he will hate you; rebuke a wise person, and he will love you. Advise the wise, and he will become wiser; teach the pious, and he will learn more. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is the foundation of understanding" (Proverbs 9:7-10).

Self-examination:

I don't listen to feedback	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	I listen to feedback

Where did you place yourself?

— Insecure, immature people do not want to address their own mistakes and weaknesses. They feel that they are above them. If someone close to you has this attitude, you may be overwhelmed by feelings of guilt and shame. Your emotional experience of closeness will be incomplete.

— In a close relationship, the insecure partner compares, competes, and defends. As partners, they gradually grow apart.

— Immature people may ask for forgiveness. This does not necessarily indicate deep remorse for their behavior and a desire to change, but is rather a learned habit. They are annoyed that their mistake has been exposed.

True repentance leads to a change of heart and behavior. A mature person is willing to resolve conflicts and correct their mistakes. Their motivation is to accept and love others.

"From that time on, Jesus proclaimed, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near' (Matt. 4:17). "I have proclaimed that everyone must repent of their sins, turn to God, and do deeds that show their repentance" (Acts 26:20). The purpose of this text is to encourage us to be completely truthful in our relationship with God.

I have had couples come to me where one spouse focuses on their own affairs and leaves all the household matters to the other, expecting to be served. When this situation is addressed, the irresponsible spouse may promise to change, but later the same pattern continues at home. Unfortunately, the responsible spouse may become tired and want to distance themselves from the other.

— It is difficult for an immature person to submit their own will to God's will. The fact that they acknowledge God's existence and are familiar with the Word of God does not always change the situation. According to the Bible, "a tree is known by its fruit." They do not have a "hunger and thirst for righteousness." Eternal life is not their goal!

“You did not choose me, but I chose you, and my will is that you set out and bear fruit, fruit that will last. When you do this, the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name” (John 15:16).

— Insecure people try to manipulate and even lie at the expense of the truth. However, only the truth sets us free. Lies imprison us.

Self-examination:

I distort the truth, I manipulate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	I speak the truth, I am open

Where do you place yourself?

— Insecure people remain stuck in their ways and do not grow as individuals. The more mature partner in a close relationship should set clear boundaries for their irresponsible spouse. This can lead to insecure people having extramarital affairs, reckless spending, or drug use.

"A wise man learns from correction, but a fool is not improved by a hundred blows" (Proverbs 17:10).

Sometimes the pain that lies ahead is the only thing that can stop us! When we accept Christ as our Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside out, we are on "God's workbench." The Holy Spirit gives us the power to change. He can break down the distorted family patterns, attitudes, and values of our childhood. He is able to create something new and beautiful in our lives.

— Insecurity and immaturity are obstacles to forming close relationships with others in marriage or friendship.

We learn to truly know each other when we are able to share our feelings, fears, failures, and experiences of hurt. Then we do not feel lonely in the world. If you feel lonely in your close relationships, you can start by examining yourself. Your feelings of separation may also be caused by obstacles within yourself, perhaps your fears and inner conflicts. Childhood traumas, such as abandonment, can come between spouses.

We are created for intimacy in our hearts, minds, and souls. This intimacy can only be achieved through openness and authenticity. Without it, the foundation of the relationship crumbles.

— It is difficult for an insecure person to give their spouse the freedom to grow. They feel abandoned if they cannot control the other person.

God uses other people to reveal our own incompleteness and selfishness to us. It is humiliating. A loving encounter can open our eyes, allowing us to avoid difficulties.

"But who can discern all their errors? Cleanse me from my transgressions, even those I do not see" (Ps. 19:13).

When people fall in love, they are blind. They are unable to assess the weaknesses in the other person's character that may affect their relationship. The future looks rosy in their dreams. Before getting married, it is important to find out what kind of person the object of your love is.

Self-examination:

I live in conflict with God	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	I strive to be obedient to God

Where do you place yourself?

It is easy to live with a mature, balanced person. "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I had the mind of a child, and I thought like a child. But now that I am a man, I have put aside childish ways" (1 Cor. 13:11).

When we want to grow from immaturity toward maturity, God's Holy Spirit is ready to help us every step of the way. We are dependent on Him in our growth.

Break free from your locked emotional patterns!

— Is your emotional life free?

— Are you able to share your joys and sorrows with others?

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8). “Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15).

If we are unable to share our feelings, we are bound in some way. If you often cry, you may be overly sensitive, or the pain in your heart may be trying to escape. Sharing does not mean absorbing other people’s feelings or being overwhelmed by them. That kind of thing wears down your emotional life and your health. The devil would like to use this to gain power over you.

Comfort, encourage, and pray with and for the person who is suffering. Beware of emotional transference! For many women, hormonal imbalances also cause emotional swings.

I have met people whose emotional life does not function at all. Negative emotions locked deep within the subconscious can flatten a person's entire emotional range. Painful emotions are easily hidden under various layers.

God gave us emotional life so that we can express ourselves. The enemy of the soul seeks to drive our emotions to extremes. There are people who are ruled by their emotions and, on the other hand, people who are emotionally poor.

Forgiveness and God's help heal and balance our emotional life.

Dear reader, I want to encourage you: “But he (the Lord) has answered me (Paul): ‘My grace is sufficient for you. My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

We will not encounter anything that God's mercy cannot handle when we pray. Where sin has become great, mercy is abundant. Even if our hearts feel empty, God wants to fill them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. When our own strength runs out, He gives us the strength to continue. Because we have everything in Him, let us cling firmly to His mercy and love. We can fix our minds on His mind, our hearts on His heart, our will on His will, and our feelings on His feelings. Then life will not wear us down, but we will persevere in His strength.

A Letter from Father to You

My child, you may not know me, but I know everything about you. (Ps. 139:1) I know when you sit down and when you rise up. (Ps. 139:2, VK)
I know all your ways. (Ps. 139:3)
Even the hairs of your head are counted.
(Matt. 10:30) You were created in my image.
(Gen. 1:27)
You are my child. (Acts 17:28)
I knew you even before you were born. (Jer. 1:5)
I chose you before the world was created. (Eph. 1:4,11-12)
You were not an accident. All your days are written in my book. (Ps. 139:15-16)
I determined the exact time and place of your birth. (Acts 17:26) You are a great wonder, a great wonder. (Ps. 139:14)
I knit you together in your mother's womb. (Ps. 139:13) I brought you into the world on your birthday. (Ps. 71:6) Every good thing you receive comes from me. (James 1:17)
I am not distant, nor am I angry, but I am the embodiment of unconditional love. (1 John 4:16)
By my own choice, I lavish my love on you. (1 John 3:1)
You are my child, and I am your Father. (1 John 3:1)
I will take care of you and provide for all your needs. (Matthew 6:31-33) My plans for your future are full of hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) I love you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)
My thoughts about you are countless. They are like grains of sand. (Ps. 139:17-18) I rejoice and exult in you. (Zeph. 3:17)
I will never stop doing good to you. (Jer. 32:40)
You are my treasure. (Ex. 19:5)
I rejoice in doing good to you. (Jer. 32:41)
I will tell you great and wonderful things. (Jer. 33:3)
If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. (Deut. 4:29)

Delight yourself in me, and I will give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4), because I gave you those desires. (Phil. 2:13)
I can do more for you than you can even imagine (Eph. 3:20), for I am your encourager (2 Thess. 2:16-17).
I am your comforting Father in your troubles. (2 Cor. 1:3-4) When your heart is broken, I am near you. (Ps. 34:19)
I carry you in my arms as a shepherd carries his lamb. (Isa. 40:11) One day I will wipe every tear from your eyes. (Rev. 21:3-4)
And I will take away all the pain you have experienced. (Rev. 21:4)
I am your Father, who loves you as my own Son, Jesus. (John 17:23) In Jesus, my love for you was most clearly revealed. (John 17:26)
Jesus represented me. (Hebrews 1:3)
He showed that I was for you, not against you. (Romans 8:3) I do not count your transgressions against you. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
Jesus reconciled us to the Father. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)
Jesus' death sealed my love for you. (1 John 4:10)
I, your Father, sacrificed my most beloved to win your love. (Rom. 8:31-32) When you accept my Son's sacrifice as a gift, you also accept me. (1 John 2:23)
Nothing can ever separate you from my love. (Romans 8:38-39)
When you return to me in heaven, there will be a celebration. (Luke 15:7)
I have always been and always will be your Father. (Eph. 3:14-15) Now I ask you, do you want to be my child? (John 1:12-13) I am waiting for you! (Luke 15:11-32)

With love,

Your Heavenly Father, Almighty God

“For by grace we are saved, not by our deeds, so that no one can boast. It is God’s great gift.”

- Kari Tikka, Armolalu.

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